



THE SPOONBILL

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(REC'D APR. 14)

PUBLISHED BY THE ORNITHOLOGY GROUP, OUTDOOR NATURE CLUB, HOUSTON, TEXAS

A MATTER OF BUSINESS -- This is "dues" time again!

As most readers of this newsletter know, you must be a member of Outdoor Nature Club to be a member of the Ornithology Group. ONC dues of \$5.00 were due in January. OG dues of \$2.00 are due by May 1. If you have not already paid your ONC dues as well as your OG dues, as a convenience to you, you may send one check for \$7.00, covering both dues (made payable to Ornithology Group) to Mrs. J.M. Gillette, 5027 Longmont, Houston, 77056. Mrs. Gillette will then forward your ONC dues to the ONC treasurer. Do not send OG dues to ONC.

Non-member subscribers to THE SPOONBILL should send their check for \$4.00 per subscription (made payable to Ornithology Group) to Mrs. Gillette at the above address..

Members and non-member subscribers who have joined OG since the first of 1978, are considered paid up through April 1979.

It would be most helpful in preparation of the roster if you are prompt in remitting your dues. Do it today! For your convenience, a form is printed on the last page.

COMING EVENTS

Saturday OG field trip to High Island area. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at roadside park in
April 15 High Island. Bring lunch and insect repellent, and hope for a rainy fallout.

Tuesday Brazosport Birders regular meeting, 7:30 p.m. at the Museum of Arts and
April 18 Sciences on College Drive in Clute.

Weekend ONC Visitor's Day at Little Thicket Sanctuary. Come for either or both
April 22 days, camping will be permitted Fri. & Sat. nights. Bring food, water, and enjoy
& 23 spring in these beautiful surroundings.

Saturday Brazosport Birders field trip to the Freeport Municipal Park. Meet at the
April 22 park at 7:30 a.m. (Freeport, in a beautification program, has "groomed"
the park, and the B.B.'s are somewhat worried that the removal of so much
underbrush may make the park less desirable to spring migrants. Let's hope
the warblers still find plenty to attract them.)

Tuesday Next SPOONBILL deadline for notices, articles, etc.
April 25

Sunday HAS Big Day Count. Same rules apply as last year, though meeting place
April 30 will be changed. Call Elaine Robinson, 461-2589, for details on count and
meeting place.

Wednesday Next Clearing House deadline.
May 3

Weekend OG field trip to Meridian State Recreation Area. Meet at noon at the park.
May 6-7 If you have any questions, call Ted Eubanks, Jr., 661-8082.

Tuesday ONC regular meeting is a Potluck Supper celebrating the 55th anniversary of
May 9 the founding of the Outdoor Nature Club. Gather at 6:00 p.m. at the Garden
Center, bring a covered dish of your choice, adequate for 6 people. This
is a good time for all members of the ONC to get together in fellowship.

Saturday OG annual picnic at the Hale Ranch Park Site from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
May 13 Please meet at FM 762 (going east) at US 59. Do not go to the Park Site as
we must enter en masse. Meet no later than 10:30 (the park is app. 17 miles
from that point). At the park we will have our picnic, then bird some of

the park. If it has rained heavily the day before or that morning, the picnic is cancelled with no rain check. Ted Eubanks or David Dauphin may be called as late as 9:00 a.m. May 13th to confirm in case of "rain-doubt".

Incidentally, David tried early this month to get a covered pavilion at Bear Creek Park and could not. If you can think of a better rain-check problem solution please let David know. With all the communication involved, and TP&W wanting advanced and definite scheduling, it would be virtually impossible to get us all into Hale later.

Weekend Fish Eating Bird Survey. See below.
June 3-4

June & July There will be no OG meetings or field trips during these two summer months.

Future trips to plan for:

Merlin Birding Tours, P.O. Box 19687, Houston 77024 - 461-2589
Maine/Nova Scotia - June 17-25, 1978 (Including pelagic birding on Blue Nose Ferry).
Southeast Arizona - Aug. 19-27, 1978 (This is said to be the best time in Arizona--the seasonal rains have cooled and greened the countryside and brought in some birds which are not there earlier).

Houston Audubon Society Tour, Elaine Robinson, 11 River Circle, Houston, 77024
Pacific Northwest - July 1-14, 1978 (Including pelagic birding, forests, etc.)

Dr. Stephen Kress, Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell U., 159 Sapsucker Woods Rd.
Australia - Oct. 22 - Nov. 12 (Call editor for details) Ithaca, N.Y. 14850

Future Items for SPOONBILL:

Remember the SPOONBILL when taking your birding vacation during the next few months. Share the highlight of your trip with us. A brief account of any birding incident that impressed you the most will be enjoyed by all SPOONBILL readers, be they "stay-at-homers" or "trippers".

Future checklists need help:

When birding any of the following three places remember to send sightings to the compilers of bird checklists of each place.

Little Thicket Sanctuary - Alfred Chandler, 1200 Bettles, Conroe 77301
Edith L. Moore Sanctuary - Bird Checklist, Houston Audubon House, 440 Wilchester,
Houston 77079
Houston Arboretum - Wesley Cureton, 2121 Ella Blvd. #70, Houston 77008

FISH EATING BIRD SURVEY by Dick Pratt

For the past ten years local birders have cooperated with Texas Fish and Wildlife biologists in a nest survey of fish eating birds. These include gulls and terns, herons, spoonbills and other rookery inhabitants. The area of local interest is Galveston Bay and environs, including West Bay to San Luis Pass and East Bay to Rollover Pass. Survey teams employ airplanes, boats and overland vehicles in an attempt to identify all nesting activities in the area. Approximately 24 specific rookeries are known, which is about 1/3 of the known rookeries along the Texas coast. Activity varies from year to year and there is a need to identify new nesting areas. With increased development of the Texas coast and changing habitats, it is essential that we continue to monitor population trends and nesting sites.

The suggestion has been made that more local birders would be interested in participating if the Fish Eating Bird Survey was combined with a general spring nest survey. It would be particularly interesting to tabulate nesting activities of hawks, kites and rare or marginal species. Present plans are to publish the results in THE SPOONBILL and establish a continuity of record keeping within our local birding group, in addition to cooperating with the State in their compilation. One approach would be along the pattern of the Christmas bird counts; however, the large area to be covered and the extended daylight of early summer mitigates against a countdown dinner on a specific day.

The present plan is to divide up the Galveston Bay area into survey units which can be surveyed at or around the weekend of June 3 and 4. Unlike Christmas migrants the nesting birds are presumably at home for several weeks. One of our critical needs is for trailered boats, and birders interested in boating to some of the bay offshore islands. Dick Pratt and Fred Collins are coordinating and compiling the count--anyone with suggestions, a boat, or interest, should contact them, 497-6138 or 493-5409.

REPORT TO THE OG by David Dauphin

The 1977-78 OG year will come to a close on April 30th. Perhaps we should look back on some of our accomplishments and some of our set-backs. This past year began with us owing Avis Brister a great deal of thanks for her calm guidance as appointed chairman for the last half of the 1976-77 year.

Our projects began in June with a Breeding Bird Survey conducted in Brazoria County. But the set-back I mentioned above began in June, also, when a hearing was held at Rice University on the U.S.F.W.S. Wetland Preservation Program. Thanks to the efforts of Jim Morgan and Ted Eubanks, Jr., and many others, the OG was in the forefront of those sending virtually thousands of letters, calls, and telegrams to the Governor, who later chose not to preserve Texas coastal wetlands.

We had some comical moments, such as Jack Gillette, after working for more than a year in trying to get information on the International Shorebird Survey, finally receiving the information he needed: the Survey did not include the Gulf of Mexico!

In August, the OG sent Linda Snyder a much deserved Certificate of Appreciation and a donation for her efforts in helping injured birds. Remember that meeting in August at Fonde with no air-conditioning and over 135 people in attendance?

In September the ONC cleaned its house, by adopting a new Constitution and By-laws that would allow anyone to join this State's oldest conservation organization.

In November, Jack Gillette was asked to take on a project of providing the Mercer Arboretum with a slide program, which he recently completed and gave full credit to the OG. Thanks, Jack! We also set up a small fund for the use of the Program Chairman to help with finding speakers for our meetings.

In December, we began what I think will be fruitfully resolved contacts with Mitchell Development in restoring West Galveston's Old House habitat. We also elected Officers sent 500 UTC Checklists to the AOU Meeting to be held at A&M in 1979, promised to send 500 maps of birding spots to them, too, voted to meet on a monthly basis, and ^{changed} our meeting place to Bayou Manor (someone must have remembered that August meeting). We also lost a friend, Bernice Hardin.

In February we learned that Cypress Creek-Katy Hockley's Harris Sparrow site would probably become a garbage dump--another set-back. We talked about oil spills at Bolivar Flats, which may just be surprising all of us this spring: the shorebirds have returned, much to our relief.

In March we learned that the "OG Annual Spring Picnic-used to be June Meeting--now May Meeting" would be held at Hale Ranch, on May 13th, where all this can end then begin again.

Thank you, Paul Nimmons, for one of the best Christmas Counts ever. Thanks, Margaret Jones, for your work in compiling the Hale Ranch Bird Survey, and that small matter, THE SPOONBILL. Thanks, Paul Jones, for the bringing us to one of the best Clearing Houses the OG has ever had. Thanks, Sarah, Noel, Alfred, Wesley, Suzi, Gladys, Ben, Elaine, Jerry, Maxine, Avis, Ted, Bob, Marilyn, Mary, Jackie, Janet, Pat, Jim, Kitty, Jan, and Stephanie, and to all of you that have helped to make this one of the best years ever.

Please show Ted the same willingness to help that you showed me. And you new folks out there need to get on the wagon and start working, too. That's what keeps the OG the most appreciated birding club in Texas.

THE ANSWER?... by Jim Morgan

In his wrap up of the 1977 Houston Christmas Count in the January SPOONBILL Paul Nimmons noted the sharp decline in the number of individuals (birds) on the Count even though the number of species was the second highest ever. Similar comments were expressed by many of the participants on the Freeport Christmas Count. Why so few individuals? After a full winter season to gather additional data, and a careful review of the 1977 Nesting Season Report in American Birds, Vol. 31, No. 6, Nov. 1977, I think the answer is now beginning to take shape. Confirmation of the answer proposed must await Breeding Bird Survey data to be published later but enough evidence is now available to make the answer highly probable. My records, Hale Ranch census data, and other birders' data included in the Clearing House, show individuals of many species down significantly in the most recent season compared to a normal winter season. Also, the nesting reports in American Birds from regions where many of our normal wintering species nest tell us that the number of individuals (and nesting pairs)

was significantly down on the nesting grounds, many species down as much as 50%! These species included most ducks, Common Flicker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Brown Creeper, House and Winter Wrens, Brown Thrasher, American Robin, Hermit Thrush, Eastern Bluebird, Golden and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and White-throated Sparrows. These same species account for the lion's share of the reduction of the number of individuals on the UTC this past winter season.

What happened? Most observers and ornithologists cited in American Birds attribute the reduction of 1977 nesting numbers mainly to the widespread, but variable, mortality caused by the severe winter of 1976-1977, and, in some part, to drought conditions in some areas. Also, the late storm and freeze in the North which occurred in early May caught many of the returning birds which had wintered in the South unprotected and without food. Hence, further mortality. Fortunately, many neotropical migrants were not yet too far north and were spared. Thus, the neotropical migrants this past fall were in good numbers.

So, the proposed answer is that the severe winter last year caused such mortality that the number of individuals was down on the nesting grounds and still down this past winter as fewer birds wintered in the same amount of geographical area. Can the affected species bounce back? Since this was a natural phenomenon that has surely happened before, the answer is a definite yes! Also, it is believed that such a phenomenon enforces the natural selection process. The theory is that the stronger individuals survive to reproduce offspring who carry on an even stronger race or species. Also, clutch sizes tend to increase as do multiple broods after such a phenomenon occurs. Unlike habitat destruction and toxic chemical poisoning this is something the natural bird life can cope with, and recover from, given a little time. And the time may be surprisingly short!

AROUND AND ABOUT

** Anyone contemplating a vacation to southern California will do well to read the March issue of WESTERN Tanager, newsletter of Los Angeles Audubon Society. One of our exchange newsletters, this issue contains an article on Birding in San Diego Co. that appears to be a great "where-to-go-and-what-to-find" account, complete with map. All our exchanges are brought to each meeting for members' perusal, however, if you can't get to a meeting and want to borrow this one (or any of them), call the editor, 665-4197.

** Bill Harwell brings us up to date on "Bald Eagles marked with red, orange, or white tags on one or both wings which were seen at different locations in west Harris Co. in January and March, 1978 by Ted Eubanks, Paul and Margaret Jones, and Jean and Bill Harwell. Information on these sightings was sent to the Office of Migratory Bird Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, Laurel, Md., and to the Bald Eagle and Osprey Survey, Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. Responses were received from the Office of Migratory Bird Management, from John C. Smith, Biologist with Texas Parks and Wildlife, and from Dr. Robert D. Ohmart and Mr. Thomas D. Hildebrandt of the Dept. of Zoology, University of Arizona.

Unfortunately, there are several groups "banding" eagles in the U.S. with the same type of markers. The University of Arizona indicated that they had used markers of the type we described, but these have also been used by a group in Wyoming. The identification of specific birds apparently cannot be made without code numbers which are on the tags. I think that fairly well precludes determination of origin except in killed or captured specimens."

** And while on the subject of Bald Eagles, the Houston Post recently carried an item on nesting Bald Eagles in Brazoria County. "Federal and state wildlife officials showed off the family of Southern bald eagles - one of seven known nesting pairs in Texas this winter - to a busload of news people and bird lovers.....The eagle safari was sponsored by Eagle Rare Bourbon. Officials of the Seagram product announced the company is undertaking a program to stir public concern for the endangered birds of prey and will contribute funds for their preservation." Very commendable, and we are glad to see industry interest themselves in the wildlife of this country. Not so commendable however, was one response elicited by this newspaper item: the SPOONBILL editor received a call from a stranger, a self-professed "sometime bird watcher and freak photographer", who obviously did not believe my honest disclaimer of any knowledge of the location of the nest she wanted to photograph. The article, a long one, was very interesting, quoting eagle experts from TP&W and Fish and Wildlife Service in Albuquerque, but one word stood out like a headlight: the eagles nervously watched the humans. Thank goodness the nest is on private property, and the two eaglets will have a chance to grow without the intrusion of over-eager photographers who don't or won't understand how worrisome their presence can be to a bird family on a nest. (Harold Scarlett, Houston Post's conservation writer, had a later article on this nest in the Sunday, April 2, newspaper).

** In March, 1975, THE SPOONBILL carried an article by Dr. Dan Johnson, then of Rice University, about the abundance of blackbirds on the Rice campus. Dr. Johnson, and some of his students in his course, "Population Ecology", were trying to learn all they could about the blackbirds, why they congregated in certain spots, etc. Following is a reprint of a Harold Scarlett column in the Houston Post recently about Dr. Johnson: "Among the blackbirds who roost every winter at Rice University, it's the real meanies who live the longest.

"That was just one of the lessons learned in a three-winter study of Rice's flying fertilizer spreaders, Dr. Dan Johnson reported Tuesday. Johnson said in one experiment, a student tested 1,402 of the birds for aggressiveness--how quickly they pecked him. The meanest birds died at only about one-fifth the expected rate, Johnson said, but the death rate was twice the norm for the timid birds.

(Dr. Johnson, who is publishing several papers on what he believes are significant findings about the urban roosting habits of winter blackbirds, returned recently to Rice to present his blackbird findings before a seminar of graduate students).

"During the peak year of the study, in early 1975, an astounding 880,000 blackbirds, mostly cowbirds, roosted on the Rice campus, the researchers found (this winter's crop was estimated at an anemic 50,000). During the study, Johnson worked out a method of calculating the campus population by measuring their droppings (collected on pizza boards set under the oaks...."like fascinating murals--bright purple droppings, beautiful greens, lovely browns").

After all this effort, Johnson recalled Tuesday, he was crestfallen when Keith Arnold, a Texas A&M University expert on blackbirds, stopped in one 1975 evening, casually viewed the incoming clouds of birds and announced: "I'd say you've got about 800,000 birds here, give or take a hundred thousand". That left Johnson with one more finding from the study: "If you don't want to mess around with bird droppings on pizza boards all winter, just call Keith Arnold!"

GLEANINGS FROM TP&W

** A state agency, a conservation group and three corporations have teamed up to help protect the Least Tern's nesting efforts on Aransas Bay. The little birds formerly nested on an offshore island, but when vegetation took over, they moved over to the mainland and put their nesting efforts in danger from "dunebuggies, dogs and water-ski watchers". Recently, Houston Oil and Mineral employees loaded a company barge with shell donated by Parker Brothers, transported it to the island, where it was spread with a Vermillion dragline over an area thought to be favorable for tern nesting. Hopefully, the birds will appreciate and use this site when they return for nesting in a few weeks.

The Least Tern is not federally listed as endangered or threatened, but its numbers on the Texas coast have declined from an estimated 6,000 pairs in 1973 to only 600 pairs, leading to its Texas listing as a protected nongame species. Only about 100 to 150 pairs nest in the Aransas Bay area each spring, of which about half utilize the Rockport Beach area.

Credit should also go to officials of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the local navigation district for their cooperation in the habitat work.

** Recently a black vulture was reported as trying to force his way into the house of a Rockport man. When John Smith, biologist with TP&W, investigated, he found the vulture waiting at the front door. To capture it, the homeowner put some hamburger on the kitchen table, opened the door, and Smith grabbed the vulture when he entered. The vulture--which must have been someone's abandoned pet--was taken several miles away and released.

** TP&W has acquired a new park site in Cameron County in South Texas, 1,100 acres of resacas and native vegetation and wildlife. In variety of flora and fauna it is comparable to the noted Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park. It will be several years before it will be opened to the public. In the meantime, it is part of the TP&W's land bank effort to try to secure choice sites when they are available, to offset spiraling land prices and to prevent loss of the land to other development.

** Using a helicopter is the most efficient method of pheasant trapping yet tried in Texas. A helicopter provided by the Houston chapter of Safari Club International was used in February to round up 110 pheasants from Matagorda and Liberty counties. All but 10 were released in Louisiana, with Texas to get a shipment of eastern turkeys next fall in return in support of its restoration program. The department used the remaining 10 birds for its ongoing pheasant research program.

AN OWLING EXPERIENCE IN THE FAR NORTH with Bessie Cornelius

My friends in Minnesota, Josephine and Steve Blanich, had been alerting me during January and February about the influx of rare owls to the Duluth area (see March SPOONBILL, page 5, Randy Korotev's report. -Ed.). I wanted to see the Boreal but that is a long way to go for one bird. On March 2 little did I dream that within 48 hours I would be looking one right in the face, noting the silvery flecks of feathers around the black facial border and admiring the chocolate brown streakings on its breast. Friends from Sandusky, Ohio, Ceil and John Frost (SPOONBILL subscribers), were here birding the Texas coast when they heard of the Minnesota owl invasion. Owls are dear to them and they could not resist the temptation of seeing a number of species in one place. Little did they realize what was in store for us. They said, "If you can arrange it, let's go".

On March 4 at 3 p.m. Steve and Jo met us at the Duluth airport and soon had us on the way for an incredible experience. Within two hours we had seen two Boreals and one Saw-whet. The latter was a bonus bird for me as it usually doesn't stay that far north during the winter. Jo and Steve's knowledge of knowing just where to find these elusive creatures made all the difference. Early the next morning, in seven degrees below zero weather, we found the Great Gray. Then followed the Hawk, Snowy and Barred. Six owls in less than 24 hours. A Long-eared had been seen the day before but we did not find it. Birders are always greedy, they always want to find that "one more" bird. It seems incredible that seven owls could be found in one place within a radius of 15 or 20 miles.

When the invasion started the latter part of December, word went out to the birding world and soon birders from 16 states had poured into the Duluth area--176 from out-of-state was the last count by Kim Eckert (author of A Birder's Guide to Minnesota). He has been tabulating and recording birds and birders since this unusual event started. They came from California (Arnold Small brought in a group quite early) to New York. John and Ceil were the first from Ohio. I was first from Texas. John Frost was the oldest birder at 89. One couple brought the youngest, a 3-month old baby. A couple of boys from an eastern state got an unusual but pleasant surprise: they went to the home of Jan Green, a prominent Duluth birder, to ask where they could find the Boreal Owl. As they were about to ring the doorbell they saw the owl sitting on the railing of her porch not three feet away. It was great to see this small, tame but usually secretive owl, that is considered to be one of the rarest of winter visitors, so closely. Field guides do not do it justice. Nor do they portray the majesty and grandeur of the Great Gray, another elusive American bird. That Sunday morning it was watching for prey from its low perch. How fortunate we were to see it so easily and closely. As we watched the Great Gray, a beautiful Pine Grosbeak lit on the tiptop of a conifer, a rare treat for southerners. We also saw during the day three Northern Shrikes, Hoary and Common Redpolls, Glaucous Gull and just a few other birds.

Not many birds around Minnesota during the winter, but as Jo Blanich so succinctly put it, "We don't have quantity right now, but we surely have quality". Indeed they do!

STRANGE PLUMAGE

During the latter part of February David Marrack, while exercising his horse at riding stables on So. Post Oak, caught a glimpse of an extremely interesting bird. Admitting that being on horseback and without binoculars is not the easiest way to identify a species, David felt this bird needed investigation for it looked to him like a Snow Bunting! He had never seen one, but knew what it should look like, the habitat--short grass--could be right, the behavior--low in shrubs, very near the ground--was not exactly what he would expect; but the bird, to the naked eye and for a brief moment looked like a Snow Bunting. Unable to return and investigate more completely, David called Margaret Anderson and Paul and Margaret Jones, who were out there within 30 minutes and who found the bird easily: a beautiful partial albino Myrtle Warbler! Strangely, the bit of color pattern shown on the large amount of white was reminiscent of the Snow Bunting's plumage. For the very short time David had the bird in sight it was apparently relatively inactive, but when the three observers saw it, its behavior of nervously flitting among shrubs, low and high, immediately removed the Snow Bunting from consideration and only a few more moments of observation through binoculars disclosed its true identity.

Referring to the remarks on "Misidentification" in the March SPOONBILL, David says this experience points up the need mentioned therein for caution and further investigation when a brief glimpse is all an observer has to go on. This was a case where the bird was one that should be there, albeit in strange plumage, and not an unlikely rarity!

THE LEARNING CORNER

Spring Migrants (Selected Problems) by T. Ben Feltner

Now comes Spring traipsing back to the Gulf Coast with her attendant migrant birds. Traditionally birders sally forth to greet the northward bound birds at this season, and many of us are already afield and binocularized anticipating swarms of warblers, orioles and tanagers. Because it is the end of winter, plumages are crisp and bright. Male warblers are easy to identify, and there are lots of them. It is the time of the easy identification, and the nadir of field problems. Right? Wrong! A great many errors occur in identifying our usual visitors, and many birds escape identification altogether because they are not spring males. Problems are often compounded by the fact that our field guides sometimes misinform or often neglect to give vital information that is quite handy for sorting out dickey-birds.

Take the two water thrushes for example: on the upper Texas coast a long-used key to their identity has been the infamous streaked vs. unstreaked throat. Northern Waterthrushes are supposed to have streaked throats while the Louisiana is clear-throated. The fact is that many Northerns have unstreaked throats, and some of them may approach the Louisiana in paleness. The leg color of the birds is variable especially in the Northern. [Jim Morgan, who has done some research on the waterthrushes, has a rather interesting note on the legs: "In Michael W. Hoke's thesis 'A Census of the Avian Fauna of Smith's Woods, High Island', he points out a field mark that held true in 53 Northern Waterthrushes he banded. The Northern Waterthrushes all had much darker legs than the flesh colored legs of the Louisiana Waterthrush]. A finely tuned ear may be able to distinguish between the chip notes, but many times the birds are silent or possess a dialect previously unheard from either species.

Louisiana Waterthrushes always possess unstreaked throats. The eyeline is always white. The flanks have a light-buff or pinkish wash contrasting with the white underparts.

Northern Waterthrushes usually possess streaked throats. The eyeline is usually yellow. The flanks have no contrasting wash along them but are uniform with the underbelly and chest.

Warbling and Philadelphia Vireos manage to confuse many birders by their similarity. The western Warbling Vireo is quite different from the eastern races and may exhibit amounts of yellowish wash on the sides equal to a Philly; but there is one fool-proof method of distinguishing them: Warbling Vireos always lack the dark lores, that is the small area between the eye and the beak, that is always found on every Philadelphia Vireo.

Yellow-throated (Sycamore) Warblers are very early migrants and have usually finished coming through the area by mid-April. Report of Sycamore Warblers from the migrant traps after that time are almost invariably female Blackburnians, a bird of very similar appearance at first glance. If you see a Sycamore Warbler on the coast after mid-April, look at it very carefully because it is unusual. A check of the eyestripe, yellow in the Blackburnian and white in the Sycamore, will quickly answer the puzzle.

One of the most confusing of all warbler groups is the genus *Oporornis*. All of them are very late migrants with the exception of the Kentucky, which is the easiest to identify. The three remaining birds, Connecticut, Mourning and MacGillivray's, are exceedingly similar in aspect. All have hyacinthine-gray heads, no wingbars and bright yellow underparts. In prior years the Connecticut Warbler has been reported from not only the UTC, but all over Texas. The fact is there are no skins or photographs of this bird from the state and its appearance here is highly unlikely. The Connecticut Warbler winters in deep South America and hits the United States usually around the 1st or 2nd of May at the tip of Florida. It bypasses Texas by sweeping Northwest from its landfall. Reports of this bird anywhere in the U.S. before May 1st are very suspect, and most April records from our area are attributable to sightings of Nashville Warblers which superficially resemble it. The Connecticut is a large, slow moving bird. It is prone to feed quietly on or near the ground in thick cover. Its hood is complete and its most distinctive feature is a complete eyering. The Nashville Warbler, which is much more common, belongs to the genus *Vermivora*. It too possesses a complete eyering. Its small size and yellow throat tell it from the Connecticut at all times. Mourning Warblers, like the Connecticut, are late migrants. A few come through in the last two or three days of April, but the majority arrive about the 5th of May. Adult males are easy to identify if seen well as they exhibit a heavily black-blotched throat and lack an eyering. MacGillivray's Warbler, which is rumored by the powers that be to be conspecific with the Mourning, differs from the Mourning by its sporting of a broken eyering and from the Connecticut in having a black throat.

Oporornis Warblers

	Male	Female
Connecticut	Complete eyering, gray hood	Complete eyering
Mourning	No eyering, black throat	No eyering
MacGillivray's	Broken eyering, black throat	Broken eyering

Both the Connecticut and the MacGillivray's have occurred only twice on the UTC. Mourning Warblers are fairly common migrants. All three of these birds are more likely to occur at least 50 miles inland, than on the coast. Although a few Mornings get caught at High Island, they are not prone to stack-up after foul weather.

The UTC is also the way-station for three species of tanagers. The males are all very easy to tell apart, but the females, and in the case of the Western Tanager, the immature, presents a somewhat more difficult problem. Although they are almost identically plumaged, these birds are readily separated by the base color of their undersides. Thus:

Tanagers

Female and immatures

Summer	Undersides warm yellow or ochre (red base), no wing bars
Scarlet	Undersides cool yellow (green base), no wing bars
Western	Undersides cool yellow, two pale or white wing bars

Good luck and good birding!

[It isn't every bird that gets named for two men, however MacGillivray's Warbler, *Oporornis tolmiei*, has that distinction. John K. Townsend, who first described the species, named it in honor of William Fraser Tolmie, a Scots doctor and officer in the Hudson's Bay Company, who made the first recorded ascent to the peak of Mt. Rainier. William MacGillivray was a Scots naturalist, a fine scholar, a great field observer and recorder, as well as a gifted author and also a prolific one. According to Words For Birds by Edward Gruson, "It was MacGillivray who wrote the major portion of the text of Audubon's Ornithological Biography. He also wrote most, if not all, of the Synopsis of the Birds of North America. Audubon, as usual, was late in paying MacGillivray for this work (not to mention that he was loath to credit MacGillivray for the effort). Audubon's gesture in naming this species for him was not sufficient; MacGillivray needed the money. However, Townsend was first in describing the species so that his designation remains the scientific name". This information, in expanded form in the book, is but one of a host of fascinating biographical notes one can find in this "ornithological, etymological, biographical and historical guide to 800 North American birds". This lexicon is one you should have on your bird book shelf. --Editor]

PLACES TO GO

Spoonbill - April 1978

** When the warblers are expected one immediately thinks of High Island--Smith Woods and Scout Woods. Please remember that Smith Woods is private property, the owners are not birders, but the Brannans, who live on the property, are, and it is due to the efforts of Wes and Kathleen Brannan that we are able to enter this birding migration mecca. Please do not block their drive, and if you see anything really rare, report it to Kathleen, or write it in the register which is usually by the front walk during spring weekends.

** As mentioned previously, public access to Dow Nature Trail is now confined to the area bordering Hwy 332 and the drainage ditch on the north, the drainage ditch on the west, Old Flag Lake on the south and South Sycamore St. on the east. Entrance is on South Sycamore St. just south of Hwy 332.

** For colorful migrants remember to check clumps of salt cedars along the beach near High Island and toward Sabine Pass. If you are making a coastal run from Freeport to Galveston via San Luis, there are several large clumps of salt cedars along the highway that can be rewarding.

** The 1300-1400 blocks of North and South Boulevards between Parkway and West Boulevard have long been known as a delight in spring migration. Also, when thinking of city birding, City Hall can be a splendid trap, especially if the weather has been rainy the night before.

** A place not to go is the Henslow Sparrow field on Mykawa Road, for it is closed to the public, trespassers will be liable to prosecution by Santa Fe. So far, nothing has been done about getting access even for a breeding bird census.

** Réprints are available of SPOONBILL maps of East and West Galveston, a corner of Brazoria Co., Smither's Lake-Maner Lake run, and West Harris County. If you lack one or more of these, send a long, stamped self addressed envelope to: Mrs. Richard Davis, 10602 Cedarhurst, Houston 77096, with your request for the map(s) you want.

** Literally thousands of peeps were seen at Bolivar Flats March 6 by John Trochet and on March 7 by T. Paul Jones. The cheering note about this is that apparently enough sand has washed in to sufficiently cover the oil deposited there by two spills so that the probers can feed.

** Use your West Harris County map to get on some of the lesser known roads out there in a search for flooded rice fields. Buff-breasted Sandpipers have been found the past several years on Beckendorf Road in a short grass field between Katy-Hockley and Katy-Hockley Cutoff, though check any short grass fields for them. White-rumped and Baird's Sandpipers (see March 1977 SPOONBILL for identification aids) should be looked for also, now into May.

** Last summer the Tropical Parulas at the famous roadside park south of Sarita were seen feeding two cowbirds. They tried a second nesting, and this time were observed feeding a cowbird and a parula (three days later, both chicks, too young to fly, had disappeared). This warbler, like the Golden-cheeked Warbler, nests in no other state in the U.S., and, like the Kirtland Warbler, is in trouble from parasitization by cowbirds. When a cowbird chick is observed being fed in the nest, it is already too late to help the parula babies. A cowbird removes a warbler egg from the nest when she deposits her own, and the cowbird, when hatched, grows too large too fast for there to be room very long for the warbler chick. Do you know the difference between a cowbird egg and a warbler egg in the nest? A massive trapping of cowbirds in the Kirtland Warbler preserve has apparently brought those warblers back from the edge of extinction; this solution is feasible only within a particular area, and takes a good bit of manpower. Nancy Strickling, who is very interested in the parasitization of the Tropical Warblers at the rest area 2.7 miles south of the flashing yellow light in Sarita, would like for any birder who sees a Tropical Parula feeding a cowbird in the nest to call her, 780-2345.

▼ AND COLIMA WARBLER

ADDED BIRD RECORD COVERAGE ON UPPER TEXAS AND ADJACENT LOUISIANA COASTS

WINGBEAT, newsletter of Sabine Audubon Society, has adopted our Clearing House formula of reporting bird sightings, calling their monthly records, Checklist. Included in this lower Sabine-Neches area are the Texas counties and Louisiana parishes that border the southern portion of the two rivers. These are: Jasper, Jefferson, Hardin, Newton, Orange and Tyler in Texas; and Beauregard, Calcasieu and Cameron in Louisiana. Between the two newsletters, WINGBEAT and THE SPOONBILL, there should be good bird records from Cameron Parish, La. to Brazoria Co., Texas. (Jefferson County gets double coverage, it is included in our reporting area also!). Mac Read, Checklist editor, points out that published data on bird life in the Lower Sabine-Neches area is largely non-existent, the area is very large, and it is going to take a lot of observers to provide meaningful records. If any OG'ers are birding in WINGBEAT territory, send your sightings to Mac Read, 1670 King Arthur Court, Orange, Texas 77630.

CLEARING HOUSE March, 1978

The Clearing House is a monthly record of bird sightings made in the six counties comprising the upper Texas coast: Jefferson, Chambers, Galveston, Harris, Ft. Bend and Brazoria. Those common species which can be readily identified and are widely distributed in the UTC will be listed with a note of "Many reports" followed by the lowest and highest numbers reported in parentheses, i.e. (1-42). If any of these species is reported in unusual habitat or numbers that will be noted separately. How to read the CH: Species: Location--(how many)date, observers.

Loon, Common: Many reports (1-8) Last date: 29
 Grebe, Horned: Freeport Marsh--(2)2,3,(1)7,8,L&MB; W.Galveston--(2)9,J
 Grebe, Eared: Many reports (2-110)
 Grebe, Pied-billed: Many reports (4-25)
 Pelican, White: Many reports (1-60)
 Pelican, Brown: Bolivar Ferry landing--(1)7,PJ (previously reported); W.Galveston--
 (4 on posts in Gulf near SeaArama)9,J
 Cormorant, Double-crested: Many reports (3-50)
 Cormorant, Olivaceous: Maner Lake--(20)7,R; Bolivar--(4)24,L&MB
 Anhinga: Maner Lake--(10)7,R; Ft.Bend Co.--(1)10,M&WA, (8)19,B, (5)25,E.
 Heron, Great Blue: Many reports (2-25)
 Heron, Green: West Galveston--(1)29,TH
 Heron, Little Blue: Many reports (1-50)
 Egret, Cattle: Many reports (1-45)

Egret, Reddish: E.Galveston--(1)7,PJ, (3)24,M; W.Galveston--(3)9,(2)20J, (1)20,29,TH,
(1)24,L&MB, (1-white phase)24,PWa, (1)26,DM; Virginia Point--(1)19,26,DM; Bolivar--
(1)21,H
Egret Great: Many reports (4-50)
Egret, Snowy: Many reports (2-40)
Heron, Louisiana: Many reports (3-10)
Night Heron, Black-crowned: Many reports (1-13)
Night Heron, Yellow-crowned: Galveston--(1)7,PJ; Ft.Bend Co.--(2)10,M&WA, (30)19,B,
(15)25,E; Houston--(1)25,WC (White Oak Bayou), (2)23,GH (Memorial Park)
Bittern, American: Many reports (1-4)
Ibis, White-faced: Many reports (1-20)
Ibis, White: Ft. Bend Co.--(300)19,B, (75)25,E; Galveston--(3)21,H, (20)24,L&MB
Spoonbill, Roseate: Freeport--(2-17)3-23,L&MB; W.Galveston--(9)4,JMo, (3)9,J, (1)19,DM,
(3)20,TH, (15)21,H, (20)24,M, (1)29,H; Brazoria NWR--(18)16,SG
Goose, Canada: San Bernard NWR--(120)10,SG; Brazoria NWR--(150)16,SG
Goose, White-fronted: Many reports (10-14) Last date: 29
Goose, Snow: Many reports (26-300) Last date: 28
Whistling Duck, Fulvous: Anahuac NWR--(30)14,L&MB, (40)12,TH, (18)20,B&JH, (30)25,PM
Mallard: Brazoria Co.--(2)7,R; Anahuac NWR--(6)25,PM
Duck, Mottled: Many reports (2-25)
Gadwall: Many reports (1-15) Last date: 25
Pintail: Many reports (4-30)
Teal, Green-winged: Many reports (5-50)
Teal, Blue-winged: Many reports (6-200)
Teal, Cinnamon: Maner Lake--(2)7,R; W.Galveston--(1)14,NS; Houston--(2)20,B&JH (Mer-
cury Dr.)
Wigeon, American: Many reports (4-40) Last date: 25
Shoveler, Northern: Many reports (3-200)
Duck, Wood: Brazoria Co.--(4)10,TH; Ft.Bend Co.--(10)19,B, (10)25,E; Houston--(2)28,PC
(Arboretum)
Redhead: Brazoria Co.--(5)2,J, (50)7,R
Duck, Ring-necked: Maner Lake--(20)7,R; Ft.Bend Co.--(3)19,B
Canvasback: Many reports (2-10) Last date: 25
Scaup, Greater: Chambers Co.--(5)13,TE (as previously described)
Scaup, Lesser: Many reports (1-400)
Goldeneye, Common: W.Galveston--(1)4,JMo
Bufflehead: Maner Lake--(2)7,R
SCOTER, COMMON: High I.--(20)24,M (see notes)
Duck, Ruddy: Many reports (2-100)
Merganser, Red-breasted: Texas City Dike--(3)4,JMo; W.Galveston--(2)9,J; (2)19,DM;
E.Galveston--(200)21,H, (250)24,M
Vulture, Turkey: Many reports (5-40)
Vulture, Black: Many reports (1-10)
Kite, White-tailed: Many reports (1-6); San Bernard NWR--(4-8)all winter,SG; Brazoria
NWR--(2-4)all winter, (1 pr.)16,SG
Kite, Mississippi: Lake Jackson--(1)26;L&MB (see notes)
lawk, Sharp-shinned: Bellaire--(1)all month, P&MJ; Ft. Bend Co.--(1)19,B; High I.--
(1)24,WC; Houston--(1)25,WC (White Oak Bayou)
lawk, Cooper's: Stafford--(1)22,DM
lawk, Red-tailed: Many reports (2-20)
lawk, Red-shouldered: Many reports (1-15); Bear Creek Park--(2-mating)20,B&JH
lawk, Broad-winged: Lake Jackson--(75)25,MA,SC,P&MJ, FH
lawk, Swainson's: San Bernard NWR--(1)23,SG (see notes)
lawk, Roughlegged: Brazoria Co.--(1)2,J (no field notes); W.Galveston--(1)9,J (no
field notes)
lawk, Ferruginous: W.Harris Co.--(1)9,P&MJ (see notes); W.Galveston--(1)14,NS (see
notes); Brazoria Co.--(1)25,MA,P&MJ (prior reports)
Eagle, Bald: W.Harris Co.--(1)9,P&MJ; Ft.Bend Co.--(1)10,M&WA; Brazoria Co.--(2 ad.-
2 chicks)21,SG, (1)31,L&MB
Hawk, Marsh: Many reports (2-20)
Osprey: W.Galveston: (1)4,G&JC, (1)14,PWa, (1)23,C
Falcon, Peregrine: Virginia Point--(1)4,L&MB (see notes); Galveston--(1)7,PJ (see
notes, (1)19,J&YG (Bank Bldg.)
Merlin: Brazoria NWR--(1)23,SG (see notes)
Kestrel, American: Many reports (4-10)
Prairie Chicken, Greater: Spaceland Airport--(1)4,JMo, (9 m., 1 f.)29,JH
Bobwhite: Many reports (2-15)
Crane, Sandhill: W.Galveston--(129)4,L&MB, (175)14,NS, (20)20,TH; Brazoria Co.--(150)
7,R (mating behavior noted); Brazoria NWR--(800-850)16,SG (see notes); Houston--(36)
19,PC (over yard)
Tall, King: Freeport--(1)9-31,L&MB; Galveston--(1)18,GH, (3)21,H, (1)29,JH; Chambers
Co.--(1)24,M; Ft.Bend Co.--(2)25,E
Tall, Clapper: Anahuac NWR--(1)12,TH; Galveston--(3)20,TH, (10)24,M, (1)29,JH

ALL
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- Rail, Virginia: Anahuac NWR--(1)18,TH, (6)24,W; W.Galveston--(1)18,GH, (1)24,M; Ft. Bend Co.--(2)19,B; Freeport--(1)23, (2)31,L&MB
- Sora: Ft. Bend Co.--(2)19,B; Galveston--(1)21,H, (2)29,JH; Anahuac NWR--(2)24,W
- Rail, Yellow: San Bernard NWR--(4)15,SG (marsh buggy); Anahuac NWR--(2)W (marsh buggy)
- Gallinule, Common: Maner Lake--(100)7,R, (4)10,TH; W.Galveston--(1)14,PWA; Ft. Bend Co.--(1)19,B
- Coot, American: Many reports (50-200)
- Jacana: Maner Lake--(1 ad.-1 Imm.)7, (from boat)R
- Oystercatcher, American: Bolivar--(5)14,NS, (3)24,M, (1)29,H
- Plover, Semipalmated: Bolivar--(25)24,M, (1)29,JH
- Plover, Piping: Galveston--(4)7,PJ, (2)20,TH; Bolivar--(300)24,M, (1)29,JH
- Plover, Snowy: Bolivar--(1)15,A, (1)29,JH
- Plover, Wilson's: Surfside--(12)4,L&MB; E.Galveston--(6)7,PJ; Bolivar--(1)15,A, (50)24,M, (6)24,L&MB, (4)29,H
- Killdeer: Many reports (10-30)
- Plover, Golden American: Many reports (1-300) Earliest date (4)4,JMo
- Plover, Black-bellied: Many reports (2-75)
- Turnstone, Ruddy: Many reports (1-20)
- Snipe, Common: Many reports (5-50)
- Curllew, Long-billed: Many reports (1-40)
- Whimbrel: W.Galveston--(1)18, (1)24,L&MB, (3)23,C, (1)24,M, (3)24,PWA, (4)31,TH
- Sandpiper, Upland: Brazoria Co.--(25)21,MA,RK; W.Galveston--(8-10)23,C, (8)24,M, (12)31,TH; W.Harris Co.--(14)28,PJ
- Sandpiper, Spotted: Ft. Bend Co.--(1)19,B; Chambers Co.--(1)20,H, Galveston--(1)29,JH
- Sandpiper, Solitary: High I.--(1)24,M; Ft. Bend Co.--(1)25,B; Galveston--(1)29,JH
- Willet: Many reports (1-25)
- Yellowlegs, Greater: Many reports (1-40)
- Yellowlegs, Lesser: Many reports (2-100)
- Knot, Red: Bolivar--(25)21,H
- Sandpiper, Purple: Quintana--(1)21,MA,RR (prior reports)
- Sandpiper, Pectoral: Houston--(1)20,B&JH (Mercury Dr.); Chambers Co.--(75)24,M; Ft. Bend Co.--(2)25,E; W.Galveston--(3)29, (5)31,TH
- Sandpiper, Least: Many reports (14-500)
- Dunlin: Many reports (50-1,500)
- Dowitcher, Short-billed: Many reports (8-75)
- Dowitcher, Long-billed: Many reports 10-1,500)
- Sandpiper, Semipalmated: Many reports (40-50)
- Sandpiper, Western: Many reports (50-100)
- Sandpiper, sp.: (5,000)24,M High I.--W.Galveston
- Godwit, Marbled: W.Galveston--(2)4,JMo, (2)14,NS, (2)21,H; Freeport--(2)22,L&MB; Bolivar--(9)14,NS, (20)24,M, (2)29,JH
- Sanderling: Many reports (50-500)
- Avocet, American: Bolivar--(5,000)14,NS, (1,000)21,H, (30)24,M, (2,000+)29,JH; Freeport--(2-7)20-30,L&MB; W.Galveston--(45)20, (2)31,TH
- Stilt, Black-necked: Galveston--(1)18,GH, (4)21,H, (1)26,DM, (6)29,JH; High I.--(15)24,M; Bolivar--(95)24,M coming in off ulf of Mexico; Houston--(2)24,WC (Mercury Dr.); Freeport--(6)29, (1)31,L&MB
- Phalarope, Wilson's: High I.--(2)24,M (see notes)
- Gull, Glaucous: E.Galveston--(1)15,A (see notes), (1)21,H (see notes); (1)24,L&MB (see notes), (1)14,NS (see notes)
- Gull, Herring: Many reports (2-64)
- Gull, Ring-billed: Many reports (5-100)
- Gull, Laughing: Many reports (100-200+)
- Gull, Franklin's: Maner Lake--(1)7,R; E.Galveston--(1)15,A; Bolivar--(1)24,L&MB; Ft. Bend Co.--(4)25,MA,P&MJ (see notes)
- Gull, Bonaparte's: Many reports (1-25)
- Tern, Gull-billed: Bolivar--(1)21,BH
- Tern, Forster's: Many reports (1-33)
- Tern, Common: Bolivar--(1)24,L&MB; Anahuac NWR--(3)25,PM; E.Galveston--(8)31,TH
- Tern, Least: Bolivar--(3)24,M, (15)29,JH; E.Galveston--(12)29, (1)31,TH
- Tern, Royal: Many reports (6-1,000)
- Tern, Sandwich: E.Galveston--(3)15,A, (n/c)21,H, (n/c)29,JH, (25)31,TH; Bolivar--(5)24,M
- Tern, Caspian: Many reports (1-15)
- Skimmer, Black: Many reports (15-200)
- Dove, Rock: Many reports (8-10)
- Dove, White-winged: Galveston--(2-6)all month,JHa (yard), (5)7,PJ, (3)18,L&MB, (8)18,GH, (1)21,H (courthouse)
- Dove, Mourning: Many reports (2-20) (some nesting)
- DOVE, RINGED TURTLE: Bellaire--(2-9) (previously reported--nesting activity noted)
- Dove, Ground: W.Galveston--(6)9,J; Ft. Bend Co.--(2)19,B; Freeport--(2)22,L&MB
- Dove, Inca: Many reports (3-15)
- Owl, Barn: W.Galveston--(1)13,20,J, (1)18,GH; San Bernard NWR--(1)15,SG (flushed from same area as Yellow Rails); Chambers Co--(1)20,B&JH; Bolivar--(1)24,M; Houston--(5)26,DM (Willowbend @ Post Oak)

- Owl, Great Horned: Houston--(1)11,PWa (yard),MA; Dow Nature Trail--(1)10,TH, (1)25,L&M
 Owl, Burrowing: Texas City Dike--(1)14,PWa (prior reports)
 Owl, Barred: Ft. Bend Co.--(5)19,B, (5)25,E; Dow Nature Trail--(1)19,L&MB
 Owl, Short-eared: San Bernard NWR--(1)10,15,SG; Quintana--(1)21,MA,RR
 Swift, Chimney: High I.--(1)24,WC; Brazoria Co.--(2)25,27,L&MB; Ft.Bend Co.--(3)25,E;
 W.Galveston--(6)25,J; Bellaire--(12)29,DM (yard)
 Hummingbird, Ruby-throated: W.Galveston--(1)13,J; Baytown--(1)14,19,H; Houston--(1)21,
 GH (yard), (1)23,PWa (yard), (1)25,WC (White Oak Bayou); High I.--(1)24,WC; Brazoria
 Co.--(1)25,L&MB
 HUMMINGBIRD, BLACK-CHINNED: Houston--(1)20,GH (no field notes); W.Galveston--(1)26,
 P.D. Holtz (fide JD - good description)
 Hummingbird, Rufous: Brazoria Co.--(2)2,J; Bellaire--(1)all month,P&MJ (yard); Hou-
 ston--(1)all winter-3/17,GH (yard), (1)all month,G&JC (yard)
 HUMMINGBIRD, ALLEN'S: Lake Jackson--(1)late Jan.-26 Mar., Fae Humphrey, et al (see
 notes)
 Kingfisher, Belted: Many reports (1-10)
 Flicker, Common: Many reports (1-25 yellow-shafted); Dow Nature Trail--(1 red-shafted)
 19,L&MB
 Woodpecker, Pileated: Many reports (1-15)
 Woodpecker, Red-bellied: Many reports (1-15)
 Woodpecker, Red-headed: Dow Nature Trail--(1)15,L&MB; Eisenhower Park--(1)17,TH; Ft.
 Bend Co.--(1)19,B
 Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied: Many reports (1-4)
 Woodpecker, Downy: Many reports (1-8)
 Kingbird, Eastern: San Bernard NWR--(1)20,SG; Anahuac NWR--(3)24,WC; Maner Lake--(1)
 25,L&MB; W.Harris Co.--(1)29,PJ
 Flycatcher, Scissor-tailed: San Bernard NWR--(1)20,SG; Crystal Beach--(1)24,L&MB;
 Spaceland Airport--(1)29,B&JH
 Flycatcher, Great Crested: High I.--(1)24,M; Houston--(1)29,TE (campus,UH)
 Phoebe, Eastern: Many reports (1-8)
 PHOEBE, BLACK: Ft. Bend Co.--(1)10,M&WA, (1)19,B (prior reports)
 Flycatcher, Vermilion: Ft. Bend Co.--(2)19,B
 Lark, Horned: Many reports (1-2)
 Swallow, Tree: Many reports (2-1,000)
 Swallow, Rough-winged: High I.--(1)24,M; Ft. Bend Co.--(40)25,E
 Swallow, Barn: High I.--(5)24,M; San Bernard NWR--(1)24,SG; Ft. Bend Co.--(5)25,E;
 W.Galveston--(10)25,J; W.Harris Co.--(3)29,PJ
 Martin, Purple: Many reports (1-20)
 Jay, Blue: Many reports (1-15)
 RAVEN, WHITE-NECKED: Richwood--(1)27,L&MB (see notes)
 Crow, Common: Many reports (10-70)
 Chickadee, Carolina: Many reports (3-30)
 Titmouse, Tufted: Many reports (1-30)
 Nuthatch, Red-breasted: Kempner Park--(1)4,L&MB; Ed White Park--(2)20,B&JH
 Nuthatch, Brown-headed: Houston--(1)26,JMo (yard)
 Creeper, Brown: Houston--(1)4,B&JH (yard), (1)14,TH (Memorial Park); Baytown--(1)5,TH
 Wren, House: Dow Nature Trail--(1)18,L&MB; Ft. Bend Co.--(3)19,B; Bolivar--(1)24,M
 Wren, Winter: Houston--(1)5,GH (Arboretum)
 Wren, Carolina: Many reports (1-10)
 Wren, Long-billed Marsh: Ft. Bend Co.--(1)19,B
 Wren, Sedge (Short-billed Marsh): W.Galveston--(1)4,JMo; High I.--(1)24,M
 Mockingbird: Many reports (1-30) (nesting activity noted)
 Catbird, Gray: Galveston--(1)7,PJ, (1)4,L&MB
 Thrasher, Brown: Many reports (1-15)
 THRASHER, CURVE-BILLED: W.Galveston--(1)11,WC, 20,J, 23,C, 24,L&MB (still there! CH Ed
 Robin, American: Many reports (1-40)
 Thrush, Wood: Houston--(1)14,TH (Memorial Park); W.Galveston--(1)26,G&JC; Freeport--
 (1)26,28,L&MB
 Thrush, Hermit: Bear Creek Park--(2)4,B&JH; Houston--(1)5,GH (Arboretum); Ft.Bend Co.
 --(10)19,B, (3)25,H; High I.--(1)24,M, (1)25,PM
 Thrush, Swainson's: Freeport--(1)28,L&MB (no field notes)
 Bluebird, Eastern: Ft. Bend Co.--(1)7,R, (4)19,B, (5)25,E; Brazoria Co.--(2)10,TH,
 (2)25,31,L&MB
 Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray: Many reports (1-60)
 Kinglet, Golden-crowned: Brazoria Co.--(3)7,R
 Kinglet, Ruby-crowned: Many reports (1-25)
 Pipit, Water: Many reports (3-12)
 Pipit, Sprague's: W.Galveston--(6)18,GH (no field notes)
 Waxwing, Cedar: Many reports (10-100) (last date 24th)
 Shrike, Loggerhead: Many reports (3-15)
 Starling: Many reports (10-100)
 Vireo, White-eyed: Ft. Bend Co.--(10)19,B, (30)25,E; High I.--(2)24,M; Houston--(1)30,
 B&JH (yard), (1)21,GH (yard); Bellaire--(2)31,PJ

- Vireo, Yellow-throated: High I.--(1)12,L; Ft.Bend Co.--(2)19,B; Bellaire--(1)31,H.
Bultmann,P&MJ (yard)
- Vireo, Solitary: Brazoria Co.--(1)7,R, (1)10,TH; Houston--(2)11,B&JH (yard); W.Galves-
ton--(2)13,J; Ft.Bend Co.--(4)19,B; High I.--(5)24,M
- Vireo, Red-eyed: Dow Nature Trail--(1)18,L&MB
- Vireo, Warbling: Brazoria Co.--(1)28,L&MB
- Warbler, Black-and-white: Many reports (1-10)
- Warbler, Prothonotary: Anahuac NWR--(1)25,PM; Ft.Bend Co.--(1)25,E; W.Galveston--(1)
27,G&JC
- Warbler, Orange-crowned: Many reports (1-4)
- Warbler, Nashville: Bear Creek Park--(1)15,PWA
- Warbler, Northern Parula: Many reports (1-30), earliest date 12th
- Warbler, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle): Many reports (4-20)
- Warbler, Yellow-throated: Surfside--(1)25,SG; W.Galveston--(2)26,G&JC
- Warbler, Pine: Houston--(3)26,JMo (yard)
- Warbler, Palm: W.Galveston--(1)18,GH, (3)18,L&MB; Ft.Bend Co.--(1)19,B
- Waterthrush, Northern: Ft.Bend Co.--(1)19,B; High I.--(1)24,M, (1)24,WC, (1)25,PM;
Brazoria Co.--(3)25,L&MB
- Waterthrush, Louisiana: High I.--(1)12,L, (2)18,L&MB, (2)24,M; Ft.Bend Co.--(1)25,E
- Warbler, Kentucky: W.Galveston--(1)26,G&JC
- Yellowthroat, Common: Many reports (1-5)
- Warbler, Hooded: Bolivar--(1)24,M; High I.--(1)24,M, (1)25,PM; Kempner Park--(1)24,
L&MB; Brazoria Co.--(2)25,(1)26,L&MB; W.Galveston--(2)26,G&JC; Houston--(1)26,PWA
(yard)
- Warbler, Wilson's: Ft. Bend Co.--(2)25,E
- Sparrow, House: Many reports (5-14)
- Meadowlark, Eastern: Many reports (50-80)
- Blackbird, Red-winged: Many reports (50-500)
- Blackbird, Brewer's: W.Galveston--(50)4,JMo; Brazoria Co.--(100)7,R
- Grackle, Boat-tailed: W.Galveston--(2)4,JMo; Brazoria Co.--(20)7,R, (2)10,TH; Ft.Bend
Co.--(1)19,B; High I.--(50)24,M
- Grackle, Great-tailed: Many reports (8-35)
- Grackle, Common: Many reports (50-100)
- Cowbird, Brown-headed: Many reports (3-50)
- Tanager, Summer: Anahuac NWR--(1)25,PM
- Grosbeak, Black-headed: Baytown--(1 imm. male)28,MA, JM (Tompkin's yard-prior reports)
- Grosbeak, Evening: N.Harris Co.--(6-25)all month, Janet Edmiston (fide MJ, see notes)
- Cardinal: Many reports (1-150)(nesting activity noted)
- PYRRHULOXIA: Barker-Cypress Rd.--(1)9,P&MJ (previously reported); Todville Rd.--(1)12,
Bruce McCandless (fide MA - good description); W.Galveston--(1 male)4-27,G&JC (Sea
Isle yard-see notes), (1 female)4,11,18,24,m.ob (Nottingham Rd.-prior reports)
- Finch, Purple: Many reports (1-50) (last date 15th)
- Sisking, Pine: Many reports (1-50)(last date 30th)
- Goldfinch, American: Many reports (5-154)(last date 25th)
- Towhee, Rufous-sided: Ft. Bend Co.--(2)19,B, (1)25,E
- Sparrow, Savannah: Many reports (10-100)
- Sparrow, Grasshopper: Brazoria Co.--(1)11,L&MB
- Sparrow, LeConte's: Spaceland Airport--(2)4,JMo; W.Galveston--(1)18,GH (very unusual
habitat - CH Ed.)
- Sparrow, Sharp-tailed: Dow Nature Trail--(1)25,L&MB
- Sparrow, Seaside: High I.--(5)24,M
- Sparrow, Vesper: Many reports (2-6)
- Sparrow, Lark: W.Galveston--(3)25,J, (1)29,JH
- Junco, Dark-eyed (Slate-colored): Ft.Bend Co.--(20)19,B
- Sparrow, Chipping: Bear Creek Park--(1)4,B&JH; Brazoria Co.--(1)11,(2)14,L&MB; Ft.
Bend Co.--(30)19,B
- Sparrow, Field: Houston--(1)18,WC (White Oak Bayou)
- Sparrow, White-crowned: W.Galveston--(3)4,JMo, (3)13,J; Ft.Bend Co.--(2)19,B; Chambers
Co.--(8)20,B&JH
- Sparrow, White-throated: Many reports (1-250)
- Sparrow, Lincoln's: Many reports (1-20)
- Sparrow, Swamp: Many reports (2-15)
- Sparrow, Song: Many reports (1-4)

CLEARING HOUSE CONTRIBUTORS March, 1978

M&WA--Margaret & Wilmer Anderson; L&MB--Larry & Martha Ballard; MAC--Mary Ann Chap-
man; G&JC--George & Jane Clayton; S&TC--Sherry & Tom Collins; P&WC--Penny & Wesley
Cureton; LC--Lorne Curran; D&JD--David & Jan Dauphin; TE--Ted L. Eubanks, Jr.; J&MG--
Jack & Mary Gillette; SG--Steve Gniadek; TH--Tyrrell Harvey; B&JH--Bill & Jean Har-
well; GH--George Howe; P&MJ--T.Paul & Margaret Jones; DM--David Marrack; PM--Peggy
Milstead; JMo--Jim Morgan; RR--Rena Ross; NS--Nancy Strickling & Julie Halford of
Kansas; JT--John Trochet; PWA--Pat Warner; A--party of MA, Johanna Grabbe & Norma

Oates; B--party of Kelly Bryan, DD, TE, JMo & JT; C--party of MA, Virginia Courtney & Norma Oates; E--party of LC, TE & JMo; H--party of B&JH & Ann Booth; J--party of Jane & John Hamilton & Martha Micks; L--party of Ann Atkins, L&MB & Shirley Wright; M--party of DD, TE & JMo; R--party of MAC & Richard Brownstein of New York; W--party of Harry & Avis Brister & WC

CLEARING HOUSE FIELD NOTES - March, 1978

COMMON (BLACK) SCOTER: Both males and females in excellent plumage. Males all black except for yellow protuberance at base of bill. Females dark, almost black, bodies with black cap and light gray face below the eye. Birds were heavy bodied and short necked. When birds raised out of water to flap wings, no white ever appeared in wings. Seen by all observers in excellent light with telescopes. --Jim Morgan

MISSISSIPPI KITE: Bird observed "kiting", pointed wings, dark wings, light trailing edge near body, black tail. --Larry Ballard

Swainson's Hawk: A bird with which I became familiar during four years in Yellowstone Park as a naturalist and biologist. --Steve Gniadek (Steve, who has been a biological technician on the Brazoria and San Bernard NWRs, has accepted a transfer to Blackwater NWR in Maryland. We're sorry he is leaving and wish him good luck).

All
CAMS → Ferruginous Hawk: Observed perched on ground, then flying to a fence post, perching briefly, then flying low along fence row near ground. Very light whitish head and front; back and wings brown with reddish look. When bird was flying away white patches on upper wings near tips readily apparent. Tail whitish with lower third mottled dusky, no terminal band apparent. Bird was never positioned so reddish "leggings" were visible. --Margaret Jones

Seen soaring over Stewart with red-tailed Hawks. Long-slender wings, longer tail than red-tailed. Very striking light "window" areas near end of wings. Tail, wings underparts liberally barred - legs more or less spotted. Concluded it to be an immature Ferruginous Hawk. --Nancy Strickling

Peregrine Falcon: Bird was perched on ledge underneath eaves of US National Bank Bldg. in Galveston. Apparently had been there for some time, as I drove around the block 3 times and he did not move from the perch. First seen about 11:15 a.m. and later at about 3:30 p.m. He is an adult male approximately 16" long; dark slate blue tail, wings dark, barred slate blue and dark gray. Breast finely barred grayish tan on white - throat slightly barred buffy on white, chin white. Black mark on face extending well into chin area, black around the eye above the white. Dark cap (perhaps, slate gray) on head. Color of eye not discernable. Could not see tarsus feathering. --T. Paul Jones

Large falcon with a single "whisker". Brownish body, dark winged - looked like a young bird. Sighted from ranges of 40 to 60 yards in good light with binoculars. --Larry Ballard

Merlin: Bird was observed with binoculars while perched at about 25 m. Bird flew from perch, flying very low over the ground, flushing a meadowlark, which it pursued briefly before disappearing. Probably an immature as the facial pattern resembled more that of the female, though it had a definite steel gray back; long banded tail; slightly larger than a kestrel. --Steve Gniadek

Wilson's Phalarope: Birds' plumage were in between winter and breeding. Very white foreneck and underparts. Long, very thin black bill. Dark stripe through and behind the eye extending down side of neck. Grayish brown back and slightly darker wings. One bird exhibited the spinning feeding habit. Seen by all three observers with binoculars and scopes. --Jim Morgan

Glaucous Gull: All reporting observers sent about the same notes on this bird, as follows: Large, heavy, essentially white bird. Larger than adjacent Herring gulls. Back had a bluish tint, tips of wings very white. Large flesh colored bill with black tip. Eye yellow. Legs flesh or pink. MA expressed opinion that this bird was not as speckled as the bird seen last year, thus probably was going into third year plumage. --CH Ed.

Franklin's Gull: All reporting observers sent about the same field notes of these birds, as follows: Very rosy pink on underparts (some observers remarked that they had never seen so rosy a bloom on this species). All reported birds with black heads. White band separating gray from black on wing tips noted in all observations. --CH Ed.

ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD: I have a small humming bird at my feeder that came here late in January. When he first arrived, he had an off white (greenish cast) throat with dark stripes in it and a dark necklace separating it from the bright white chest. When the dark necklace caught the sun it was the color of a new copper penny. The flanks were rufous as was the stomach. Under the tail was white. The forehead and top of the head was iridescent green. The nape and back was a dull bronze green with flecks of iridescent green. The rump and tail were rufous with dark brown or black tip. The tail has always been held in a pointed position, never flared-out even when frightened or feeding. The shoulders were the same dull green with iridescent green flecks. The wings were the same dark brown or black as the tail when folded against the body.

It changed very little until late February. The back became more and more iridescent green. The throat developed more dark areas--when flared in the sun it was bright copper.

By Good Friday it had a complete gorget--extending from just back of the eye to just back of the other eye. There is an area of rufous extending from the edge of the gorget to almost the rest of the nape except for a small area of green in the middle of the nape. The throat is still bright white. The belly and flanks still rufous. The iridescent green back curves down to the rufous rump. Tail is rufous with dark tips. Its voice was a chipping and buzzing sound. The last week it has developed a high pitched metallic whine when in flight and while hovering at the feeder. It is very aggressive toward the rufous and ruby-throats.

I also have an immature rufous that I have been able to compare this bird with in its development. The rufous has the iridescent green forehead and crown but its nape and back have changed from a dusty green to a solid rufous. It hasn't developed a total gorget yet but its developing more spots in the throat area. The rufous on the flanks does not extend across the stomach--there's a small stripe of white down the stomach. The chest is a dirty white and there is not as distinct a delineation between the chest and stomach as on the other bird. --Fae Humphrey

Bird was seen March 25 by Paul and Margaret Jones, Margaret Anderson, Tom and Sherry Collins, in addition to Fae Humphrey. All agree on the following details: green cap; brownish color below cap; copper red gorget; white upper breast between gorget and belly; belly was rufous all the way across; back was iridescent green from rump up, joined to green cap by narrow perpendicular line of green in center of back of head; rump bright rufous, divided distinctly and sharply from green back; tail rufous, no green. Direct comparison made with immature Rufous, which came alternately to feeder. Observed as close as six feet. Bird photographed March 24 and 25 by Tom Collins, on March 25 by Paul Jones. --Margaret Jones

WHITE-NECKED RAVEN: A quick sighting of a bird flying into a tree, the silhouette and size somewhat resembling a small buteo. We stopped the car and focused our binoculars on the two trees immediately in front of us. In the first tree was common crow, in the second tree was a black bird that looked different, the beak was heavier than the crow, and the neck appeared to have a ruff of feathers around it, the wind then ruffled the neck feathers, a white ring appeared around the neck. The bird had to be a white-necked raven. We watched the bird for 4 minutes when he flew away. The light was strong and sunny, bird observed at a range of about 60 yards with binoculars. This was the fourth time that we have observed the white-necked raven under similar circumstances with the white neck exposed, but it was our first observation of this bird in the UTC. --Larry Ballard (Last confirmed sighting of this species in the UTC: 1967. --CH Ed.)

Evening Grosbeak: According to Janet Edmiston, at whose feeder these birds have been seen, the grosbeaks were first noticed January 27. At times reaching peaks of 20 to 25 birds, the numbers dropped sharply the last several days of March, with a bare handful being seen March 31. The gracious hospitality of this family has enabled many observers to see and photograph these birds. --CH Ed.

PYRRHULOXIA: On the morning of March 4th we located the Nottingham Road bird and shortly after returning to our place at Sea Isle we noticed a sharply crested gray cardinal size bird with markedly curved yellow bill, red wings and tail and beautiful red markings on the chest. This male pyrrhuloxia has been seen every weekend since and was last seen on March 27 in the same locale. Mrs. Nancy Strickling and Mrs. Julie Halford of Kansas saw it here on March 14th. --George Clayton (Hopefully, this male and the female on Nottingham Road will find each other during this season and add another nesting species to the UTC. --CH Ed.)

MINUTES, REGULAR MEETING, ORNITHOLOGY GROUP, April 6, 1978

The April 6 meeting of the Ornithology Group was called to order by Chairman Dauphin at 7:30 p.m. Chairman Dauphin reminded members that both the rental scope and slide library were available from the OG. He also reminded the membership that the group was still collecting aluminum for sale, and urged those with aluminum to contact Jerry Baker. The minutes from the last meeting, and published in THE SPOONBILL, were accepted as printed.

The date of the annual OG Spring picnic has been changed to May 13, and will be held at the Hale Ranch State Park site. Members should meet at the car park 100 yards east of the intersection of FM 762 and US 59 near Richmond at 10:30 a.m. The group will then enter the park site in mass, and will stay until 3:00 p.m. No member will be allowed to enter the park either before or after the group does.

The T.O.S. Spring meeting will be held in Alpine, May 18-20. Birding trips will include the Davis Mountains and Big Bend. Chairman Dauphin urged members to attend the ONC meeting in May.

Treasurer Mary Gillette reported an income of \$600 for March, with expenses of \$62, giving the OG a balance of \$1,733.40. She reported that one campsite remained available for the May 6-7 OG field trip to Meridian State Park.

Clearing House Editor, Paul Jones, reported that 237 species had been submitted to him for the month of March.

Rare Bird Alert Chairman David Dauphin reported on rare birds reported to him in March: Allen's Hummingbird and White-necked Raven in Lake Jackson, three Swallow-tailed Kites, and the Burrowing Owl, Prairie Warbler and Pyrrhuloxia were still being seen in their respective locations.

Librarian Avis Brister reported the donation of The Shorebirds of North America to the OG Library by Jim Beatty.

A motion was made to change the fiscal year of the OG to January 1 through Dec. 31 which will coincide with a similar motion made by the ONC recently. The motion carried.

Members birding on April 22 are urged to report their sightings of hawks to the North American Hawk Migration Association which will be conducting a census that day.

Paul Jones reported on a boat trip taken by several members recently on the "New Buccaneer" out of Galveston.

Bill Harwell reported the nesting of White-tailed Kites at Galveston Island State Park.

Dick Pratt reported on the annual Fish-eating Bird Survey which will be conducted the last week of May through the first two weeks of June. Efforts will concentrate on the weekend of June 3-4. Those interested in participating should contact Dick.

Lorne Curran announced the publishing of a checklist compiled by him on the birds of the Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary. Copies of this checklist, published by the Audubon Society, are available from either Lorne or at the Sanctuary.

Bob Moulton introduced the program for the evening, the film "What Good is a Warbler" which concerned the Hill country and the Golden-cheeked Warbler. After the film the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Dauphin.

Respectfully submitted, Janet Eubanks

RARE BIRD ALERT

If you wish your name to be placed on, or continue to be placed on, the Rare Bird Alert, it is important that you return this form to:

David Dauphin
2300 Taft, #165
Baytown, Texas 77520

Please place my name on the Rare Bird Alert.
(Please print)

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ADDRESS: _____

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Please make checks payable to Ornithology Group and return to:

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Chairman: David Dauphin, 2300 Taft #165, Baytown, Texas 77520 (Call David for Rare Bird Alert and Unusual Bird Check)	422-7536
Treasurer: Mary Gillette, 5027 Longmont, Houston, Texas 77056 (Send dues, subscriptions and changes of address to Mary)	626-1755
THE SPOONBILL: Margaret Jones, 4902 Fern, Bellaire, Texas 77401 (Send material for newsletter to Margaret by 25th of month)	665-4197
Clearing House: T. Paul Jones, 4902 Fern, Bellaire, Texas 77401 (Send bird records for CH to Paul before 3rd of month)	665-4197
Mailing: Maxine Davis, 10602 Cedarhurst, Houston, Texas 77096 (Send requests for checklists and OG information to Maxine)	723-8559