



THE SPOONBILL

Volume XXIV, No. 4
August 1980

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

COMING EVENTS

- August 23-24 Mississippi Kite Watch. Please plan a watch for one of these days and send your reports to G. Donohue, Dr. 400, Penitas, TX 78576. Kites must be migrants. Data sheets will be sent on request.
- Saturday Aug. 30 OG field trip to Galveston and Bolivar Flats, looking migrants and shorebirds. Meet at Kempner Park, 27th and O, Galveston, at 7:30 a.m. Half-day birding (or longer for those who desire). Bring lunch.
- Weekend: August 29 to September 1. Labor Day weekend is a good time for Visitors Days, the first for this season at our Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary. For a peaceful Summer-windup/Fall beginning, plan to enjoy Sanctuary for all or part of this long weekend. You can camp Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, or any one or two of them, just as you choose. Remember to bring plenty of water, drinking and face-washing, and bags in which to carry home your trash. (There are a few mosquitoes, not many, according to Marian Taylor).
- Wednesday Sep. 3 Photography Group regular meeting, 7:30 p.m. at Bayou Manor auditorium, 4141 South Braeswood. A slide show of the past on the Little Thicket will be shown and plans made to update it and replace any faded slides. Visitors are welcome.
- Thursday Sep. 4 OG regular meeting, 7:30 p.m. at Bayou Manor auditorium, 4141 South Braeswood. In recognition of the growing interest of many of our members in birding in Central America, Linda Roach will present a program on the Merlin Birding Tour to Panama this past January. An artist with the camera as well as the brush, Linda's slides are well worth seeing.
- Tuesday Sep. 9 ONC regular meeting, 7:30 p.m. at Garden Center in Hermann Park. Dr. Dwight Deal of the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute will present a program on the "Lower Canyons of the Rio Grande". We especially invite new members to attend and get acquainted.
- Sep. 13 HAS field trip to Cypress Creek and north Harris Co. No details known.
- Sep. 13-14 Mississippi Kite Watch, 2nd section. Same directions as above.
- Saturday Sep. 20 OG field trip to Bolivar Peninsula and Anahuac. This field trip will be the first in a newly designed format for field trips. (See David Matson's statement on this on page 2.) You may meet either at the gate of Anahuac NWR at 7:30 a.m. or at the Bolivar side of the Bolivar ferry at 7:30 a.m. The Anahuac party will bird at the Refuge and work toward High Is; the Bolivar party will work Bolivar Flats, then also move toward High Is. Both groups will meet between 11:30 a.m. and noon for lunch at the roadside park in High Island. After lunch and an exchange of sightings, we will check Smith and Boy Scout woods for migrants. Bring lots of mosquito repellent, lunch, and enthusiasm for a half or a full day.
- Sunday Sep. 21 Photography Group's field trip to Anahuac NWR. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at entrance. Exchange ideas, sightings of flora or fauna, photograph what you will, from birds to alligators. Bring lunch and mosquito repellent.
- Sep. 26, 27, 28 -- The first of Ben Feltner's UTC Fall Birding Seminars. See page 2 for details.

BEN FELTNER ANNOUNCES NEW ORGANIZATION: PEREGRINE, INC.

New name, new logo, additional new directions, enhanced tour program....this is Peregrine Inc. There will be an expanded birding tour schedule, and in addition some new tours exploring other areas of natural history. Ben, as Director, has been joined by three other permanent leaders, Dr. David Mark, Robert A. Behrstock, and David J. Markely, all selected for their field skills and ability to transmit knowledge and enthusiasm.

Mary Ann Chapman, owner of a computer software firm and compiler of the Teziutlan Christmas Count in Puebla, Mexico, will manage the business affairs. Linda Roach, wildlife artist and assistant leader on several MBT tours, will coordinate tour arrangements. Information requested will receive immediate attention.....telephone (713)520-7747, or write PO Box 3062, Houston, Texas 77001.

The Peregrine, Inc. debut of the 1981 season will be a low cost trip running the length of Eastern Mexico. Now is the time to start planning for Mexican Christmas Counts and this trip. Contact Peregrine, Inc. for further information, and ask them to send you their exciting 1981 brochure.

FALL MIGRATION ON THE UPPER TEXAS COAST WITH BEN FELTNER

As Director of Peregrine, Inc., Ben Feltner is offering seminars on Bird Identification and Field Problems. The seminars are designed to explore the wealth of bird-life found on the Upper Texas Coast with emphasis in developing your field skills and abilities in separating different plumaged fall warblers, waders, etc. There are five three-day weekends planned, based in Beaumont, that are in the midst of fall migration. The price of the seminar is \$60.00 for 3 days. Transportation, meals and lodging will be the responsibility of the participants. You will be aided in obtaining motel reservations and assistance in bringing together car-poolers, roommates, wherever possible. The dates are:

September 26, 27, 28	October 3, 4, 5,	October 10, 11, 12
October 17, 18, 19	October 24, 25, 26	

Contact Peregrine, Inc. for further information. These weekends sound like winners to me...how great to have an expert like Ben teach you on-site how to recognize those confusing fall warblers and shorebirds!

NEW FIELD TRIP IDEA by David O. Matson

There have been some helpful suggestions by OG members on how to reduce the length of our field trip caravans, which seem to be getting longer and longer. We all enjoy the camaraderie of the OG field trips, but we also realize smaller groups are desirable. To maximize contact and birding enjoyment, we are going to try out a new field trip plan this year.

The idea is to have two field trips in one. Two meeting places will be designated--you choose. The trips will be planned so that both groups will meet for lunch, and exchange sightings and other news. After lunch participants will be able to go after the good birds scouted out by the other party, or continue on with the field trip leader he started with, or hang up the binocs for the day. In this way, we hope to have more people see more birds, but still have the chance to see the same number of people. If this type of field trip doesn't work out, we can always have the traditional caravan back, or perhaps try something else new.

The first trip of this kind is September 20. Let me know what you think of it!

HISTORY OF THE LITTLE THICKET NATURE SANCTUARY...Part 5

On May 17, 1951 all necessary papers were drawn up and signed by Dr. Dean H. Kendall and Anthony S. Manis, Treasurer. We quote from the deed: "The State of Texas, County of Harris, State of Texas for and in consideration of the sum of Eight Thousand Seven Hundred and Eight (8,708.00) Dollars to me paid and secured to be paid by Outdoor Nature Club, a private corporation with headquarters in Houston, Texas, acting by its duly authorized officers, as follows: Two Hundred and Eight Dollars (\$208.00) to me cash in hand paid, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, and one certain promissory note, of even date herewith, due on or before twenty (20) years after date, for the sum of Eight Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$8,500).

executed by said Outdoor Nature Club, payable to J. M. Heiser, Jr., or Order, in installments of Fifty Dollars (\$50.00) or any multiple thereof, with interest on any balance thereof, from date until paid, at the rate of three per cent (3%) per annum, payable annually, both principal and interest payable at the National Bank of Commerce, Houston, Texas; said note being secured by Vendor's Lien, as hereinafter set forth, and by Deed of Trust of even date herewith to R. A. Heiser, Trustee--And the further consideration of the pledge and covenant of the Outdoor Nature Club to maintain and administer the property herein conveyed as a NATURE SANCTUARY for the protection and study of native species of flora and fauna and the scenery and other natural features of the TEXAS BIG THICKET area--have Granted, Sold and Conveyed, and by these presents do Grant, Sell and Convey, unto the said Outdoor Nature Club of the County of Harris State of Texas, all that certain lot or parcel of land conveyed to said J. M. Heiser, Jr., by Mrs. Willie V. Park, by Correction Deed dated September 19, 1960, and recorded in Volume 56, Page 538, of the Deed Records of San Jacinto County, Texas, to which reference is here made for more complete description. The land herein conveyed being designated in said as comprised of five tracts, as follows:

"Tract One, 223 acres; Tract Two 175.7 acres (also called 175 acres); Tract Three, 45.23 acres (also called 45 1/2 acres); all of said three tracts lying and being situated in the County of San Jacinto and being a part and parcel of the Berry Beasley Headright League, Abstract No. 3. Tract Four, 10 1/2 acres, more or less, also being a part of the Berry Beasley League; and Tract Five, containing 85/100 acres of land, being a part of the Vital Flores Grant, Abstract No. 14, in San Jacinto County, Texas....But it is expressly agreed and stipulated that the Vendor's Lien is retained against the above described property, premises and improvements, until the above described note, and all interest thereon, are fully paid according to its face and tenor, effect and reading, when this deed shall become absolute.

Witness my hand at Houston, Harris County, Texas this 17th day of May, A.D. 1951
J. M. Heiser, Jr.

Notarized by C.E. Buehner

HAS-MERLIN BIRDING TOUR TO GREAT BRITAIN OUTSTANDING SUCCESS by Margaret Jones

Total immersion! That was the way 20 fortunate people experienced Great Britain under the leadership of Bryan Bland and Ben Feltner, assisted by Betty Bland. The scope of the trip was breathtaking, 2800 miles in three weeks, searching for bird specialities, reveling in the scenery...absorbing selected bits of history as we rolled along, or paused at a cathedral, a castle, an important geological spot, a battlefield....all the while with our ears beguiled by music chosen to fit the area or era. We sampled, we savored the flavor of the land as Bryan kept up a seemingly inexhaustible flow of information on every aspect of the countryside we were passing through. His performance for three weeks was an extraordinary tour de force.

To fashion the tour, Elaine Robinson and Ben Feltner gave Bryan a few requirements: Visit England, Scotland and Wales, and, though primarily a birding trip, some historical places and a bit of shopping must be allowed for. In fulfilling these requirements, the incredible amount of preparation by Bryan and his wife, Betty, gave us a unique experience we will never forget. They "boned up" on the history of the various areas we were to visit, many of them well off the usual paths of tourists, planned the itinerary so as to take advantage of such treats as York's annual Medieval Festival, or an evening in their home in Cley-next-the-sea with Robert Gilmore, a famous and personable British bird illustrator. We visited many of the preserves of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, a private organization, and some County Trust preserves. (But the results of the devotion of Britons to the protection of birds and preservation of habitat deserves a special article, which will appear in a later issue). Prior to and during the trip, Bryan was in contact with fellow British birders so as to keep abreast of any unexpected rare visitor which might come along. We came home secure in the knowledge we had had an overall view of Great Britain very few Britons have had.

There was so much to see, and so much ground to cover, our days were long and filled with something for everyone. Most days the avid birders would be up and out for a ramble with Bryan and Ben before breakfast, then, if we were remaining in the area for the day, the birders took off again, while the sightseers and shoppers among us went with Betty Bland to absorb some history and enjoy the sights and shops. On our traveling days, which often were long, we had numerous stops along the way in order to find particular birds, or pause at a particular historical spot, or eagerly welcome a rest stop at one of the public toilets, which we always found clean and orderly, whether in hamlets or in towns

We quickly found we were a "simpatico" group, and enjoyed changing seatmates on the coach almost daily, thus getting acquainted with everyone on the trip on a one-to-one basis. Betty Bland was a delightful, knowledgeable and charming companion, eager to share her love of her country with us. As the trip wore on, we found we were all sharing a sense of pride in the very uniqueness of our adventure. Also contributing immeasurably to the pleasure of our trip was our coach driver, John Stratton of Norfolk, an excellent driver, a gentle man of unfailing good nature and ever-ready smile. Quite a few times John was forced to tool the coach through some tricky maneuvers (who can forget the way he eased the coach through a narrow archway on a narrow road in Conway, Wales, going uphill....with no more than a couple of inches on each side). Our respect, admiration and affection often found voice in a burst of cheers and applause when he had navigated the coach over another tight spot.

We all came home with a few special memories that touched us personally, different ones for different people, but I believe all of us shared the emotional tug at the heart as we stood by Ben Feltner in front of the little vine-covered stone Cotswold cottage where his grandfather was born. And many of us were touched by the sound of the bagpipes as the ferry pulled away from the island of Barra in the Outer Hebrides, and the young piper (a member of the Gaelic Players going on tour) played the pipes in a re-enactment of an emigrant's farewell to his island home.

Of course the birds were the primary interest of the trip, and there were many special birds and special moments. Birding for specialties is a great deal different from going to High Island, for instance, to see what is there. Going to a certain area for a certain bird was what this trip was all about....in doing so we stored up many memories of bits of Britain we might not otherwise have seen. When we see "Marsh Warbler" on our lists, we'll remember standing on the edge of the centuries-old Ecklington Bridge over the Avon as that elusive little bird flitted back and forth across the river just a few yards from us. "Chough" brings up the vision of the cliffs of Holyhead Island and the blue, blue Irish Sea bathed in bright sunshine. Just mention "Red Kite", and that wild and lonely mid-Wales road once more stretches out in front of us. And on and on, down the list.

Though we never had to search for the ubiquitous Song Thrush, it will always mean to me my first morning in Cley-next-the-sea, when I slipped out early (about 4:30) for a stroll. Though daylight was far advanced, no one was abroad but me....no cars, no voices, not even a smell of coffee to indicate anyone was awake....just bird song luring me on through the streets and paths of this quaint, seemingly enchanted village. It was a special moment of which the Song Thrush was an integral part, but it was the place that cast the spell.

Two of our group, Dottie Leslie and Laura Singleton, agreed to share with you their very special moments centered on two hard-to-find birds, the Dotterel, a species found in breeding season in small numbers in British mountains, and the Dartford Warbler, a tiny, secretive bird, formerly widespread, which now is found only in gorse and heath in extreme South England.

Dottie Leslie writes: "The most thrilling birding experience for me occurred at the last part of the last birding day. We had been hoping to find a Dartford warbler and had been intermittently looking for one for two days. The group had dwindled to the two excellent guides, Bryan and Ben, and four tired birders. We had been walking for what seemed to be miles in long heather and an occasional bit of gorse. It is necessary to raise one's foot about ten inches before moving it forward.... Suddenly there they were! Two incredibly beautiful, tiny warblers with very long cocked tails. The pair were busily and happily catching insects and feeding their family. We watched them for twenty to thirty minutes since they seemed unaware of the presence of the aliens with black tubes seemingly glued to their eyes. As we hiked wearily back to our coach, each of us seemed to be filled with a strong feeling of inner peace. A great moment!"

From Laura Singleton's trip Journal: "Next morning we took the bus to the foot of the Cairngorm and rode the chairlift part way up....was very apprehensive about the chairlift, but it was kind of fun. But that was only the beginning of the climb! We were up above timberline and little growing but grass and saxifrage. Most of the group went no further, but a few of us went on....and on....and on over hill after hill and still no birds. Finally everyone had turned back but Bryan, Ben, Emily Robinson and me. We went on and on up to the High Lake and the snow patchesI can't describe how still and beautiful and out of the world it was. Finally, across a little stream and snow patch and up among the rocks we found the Snow Bunting....a beautiful bird and had a good look at 2 males and a female. Then on and on again and all the while Bryan is running up and down hill and back and forth covering the entire area like some kind of mechanical mountain goat. Don't know

where he gets his superhuman energy! And at last...the Dotterel! It was a magical moment, the all time birding thrill for me. We sat quietly for about 15 minutes and watched....so still....and then the male came, and a tiny chick....beautiful vivid color....it looked like leopard skin...."

And that was our trip.....a unique experience to be cherished for a long, long time.

BARN OWL BECOMES A MALL OWL by T. Paul Jones

A neighbor of our called up about noon on July 29th to tell of a "very large owl" roosting in a tree in the open mall at Meyerland Plaza. A hurried trip to the mall revealed a very handsome adult Barn Owl perched watching the passersby. Of course, someone with binoculars looking up in the trees attracted some attention, and I had the pleasure of introducing *Tyto Alba* to a few of the shoppers. I noticed that there were no other birds in the mall, none of the house sparrows, starlings, or grackles which are usually there. Margaret went to the mall about 8 p.m. that evening to see if the purple martins were flocking in to roost as they have done about this time of the year for the past several years. The Barn Owl was there, but no martins or other birds.

Hoping the owl would still be there I took a camera out next day, and found him in the same tree and perched very conveniently for photographic composition. He was asleep when I arrived, but some squeaking noises I made alerted him to look around. Did he really think I was a rat? Apparently not, because he did a little preening and went back to his nap. I can assure you that a guy with a long lens camera aimed up in a tree and making squeaking noises attracts more attention from the shoppers than someone with binoculars! So we had a barn owl identification class on the spot. I hope that the exposures I made on the film are as interesting as the "class".

One man who stopped to talk about the owl said he had been told that as many as three had been seen at the mall. Naturally, this called for further research, so I contacted Mrs. Leota Hess, operator of Meyerland Company. She told me that they first became aware that there were no birds in the mall about 8 weeks or so ago. At about the same time, one of the shopkeepers showed her the owl perched in the tree, and reported that two smaller ones that looked just like the one in the tree had been seen earlier. Mrs. Hess says that this owl has been perching in this same tree ever since, but the other two have not been reported. She thinks that this bird was displaced from some unoccupied buildings south of this area which were destroyed by fire recently. Naturally she is pleased to have the owl in the mall since it seems to be keeping the "trash birds" away, and has eliminated the daily scrubbing problem necessitated by them. One guardian barn owl is a great exchange for thousands of grackles in winter, and hundreds of thousands of martins in summer!

The owl perches about two-thirds up in a live oak tree directly in front of the Gibraltar Savings and Loan office, immediately adjacent to the crosswalk canopy. We hope he has found a permanent home there. Perhaps the nesting box information I sent Mrs. Hess will prove helpful. .

JUNE BIRDING IN MEXICO....with Jim Morgan

Some birders are repelled by the idea of summer birding in the tropical lowlands of Mexico because not only will it be hot but the rainy season is underway and the thought of losing birding time to the rains is not too appealing. However, birding Mexico in June offers the advantage that many birds are in full song, making them easier to locate and often easier to identify if visual field marks are not too helpful on difficult species.

With such a background as above, Kelly Bryan, Ted Eubanks, Jr. and your truly flew from Houston to Merida on the Yucatan peninsula on June 20. We were met at the airport by Peter Scott and Bret Whitney. Bret was visiting Peter, the latter doing research work in Mexico on Turquoise-browed Motmots and also gathering nesting data on Cave Swallows. Peter had the following day off from his work so we immediately departed for Celestun in hopes of finding the American Flamingo colony still there.

We were not to be disappointed as approximately 400 Flamingos were present and some flew within 100 feet of us allowing excellent opportunities to view this magnificent bird. Birding in and around the Celestun area we also found many other species (about 100 total) including our first Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Mexican Shearwater, P gmy Kingfisher, Yucatan Wren, White-lored Gnat-

catcher, and Yellow-tailed, Yellow-backed and Orange Orioles.

On Sunday, June 22, Kelly, Ted and I set off for Palenque with occasional birding stops along the way. Highlights of this day on the road were the observation of some fantastic aerial acrobatics of a Short-tailed Hawk, including one of the finest "stoops" I have ever seen, the viewing of a Black Hawk-Eagle in Campeche, numerous Limpkin in the marshes along the highway, and our first view of Fork-tailed Flycatchers.

We spent the next three days birding in the Palenque area. We rose early, birded until late morning, swam and took a siesta in early afternoon, and birded after the usual afternoon thunder showers, which acted to drop the temperature 10-15 degrees. Highlights of our Palenque birding included White Hawk, many hummingbirds (about 7 lifers), Massena Trogon, Keel-billed Toucan, Sepia-capped Flycatcher, both Green and Red-legged Honeycreepers, Chestnut-headed Oropendola, five "new" tanagers, including the beautiful Golden-masked Tanager and my favorite, the Scarlet-rumped Tanager.

A side trip to a beautiful waterfall about 12 miles from Palenque yielded Scaled Pigeon, Blue Ground-Dove and Violet Sabrewing. A second side trip to the area Ben Felner calls "Jabiru Marsh" about 30 miles from Palenque was fruitful with great looks at both an adult and immature Bare-throated Tiger-Heron, numerous Limpkin and Jacanas, and the magnificent Black-collared Hawk.

Night birding around Palenque turned up Vermiculated Screech Owl (due to Ted's good calling) and Pit-sweet, plus numerous Paraques and several Mottled Wood Owls. A real treat was seeing a Boat-billed Heron standing in the middle of the road on our return to the motel on our last night at Palenque.

We enjoyed all the birds at Palenque, but our best bird by far was the Solitary Eagle we saw while "hawking" one morning from the top of the ruins. This short-tailed, very broadwinged raptor dwarfed the nearby vultures and we observed the entire bird both top and bottom with binocs and scope and noted all field marks necessary to eliminate both Common and Great Black Hawks (which, incidentally, we saw as well on our trip). Not as rare, but equally impressive, was the White Hawk. It must be seen to be appreciated.

On our return trip back to Yucatan we saw a Pinnated Bittern in a marsh in Tabasco and we were fortunate to see a Jaguarundi which crossed the road in front of us.

The next day and one-half we birded around the ruins at Uxmal, Xlapak, Labna and Sayil. We found and got excellent looks at Lesser Roadrunner, many Turquoise-browed Motmots (a beautiful bird!), Yucatan Flycatcher, Yucatan Jay, Black Catbird, and other area specialties. In addition to the birds we thoroughly enjoyed the Mayan ruins which made an interesting backdrop for our birding.

A final tally for our seven and one-half days of birding resulted in us logging 232 species seen or heard, of which only about 75 species are regularly found in "North America". All three of us saw many lifers, my 99 being the least amount of all. Both Kelly and Ted topped 100 lifers.

In all we found June birding in Mexico to be great! Hot, yes, but we had no problem with the rain (it actually helped) and the birds were singing, which added much to our enjoyment. We also noted much nesting activity and we saw such delightful sights as Collared Aracarís and Fork-tailed Flycatchers feeding young. Outside our motel room door we had a Variable Seedeater on a nest (in Palenque) and we saw at least one female hummingbird on a nest. In addition, starting the morning listening to Howler Monkeys beats hearing the noise of Houston rush hour traffic!

Many thanks go out to Peter Scott for his hospitality, guidance and suggestions. Also, it was most enjoyable to bird the one day with Bret Whitney, who has a remarkable talent of recognizing, recalling and duplicating the songs of many Mexican species. Our thanks to Bret as well for his suggestions on where to bird at Palenque.

THE ARBORETUM...AN OASIS IN THE CITY

The Houston Arboretum & Botanical Society, usually called The Arboretum, announces the acquisition of a new Director, John D. Horkel. With several degrees in biological science and wildlife and fisheries science, a background in research, experience in teaching and management, he should do well in continuing and enhancing the programs at the Arboretum, as well as bringing in new ideas.

The Arboretum is the most delightful spot inside the Loop, or even outside it for many miles around. Easily accessible, with opportunities for volunteer work of your choice if you desire, the Arboretum has much to offer you. The AMIGOS, the volunteer organization of the Houston Arboretum and Botanical Society, publishes a newsletter about activities at the Arboretum, which is always interesting and amusing to read. The August issue concludes an analysis of the soil environment with a review of the plants that grow naturally there, an excellent article for the layman. One immediately begins to think in terms of, not a checklist of birds for the Arboretum (which has been done), but rather what birds would be found only in what particular area. This should be an interesting on-going personal project for anyone who wishes to add another birding facet to just listing, as well as adding some addenda to the checklist of the Arboretum.

The newsletter also tells about new trails which have been made, some trails shifted, a pond/prairie environment created, and an outdoor classroom adjacent to that environment which was built with an upper observation deck.

For more information about joining the Society and receiving their newsletter, call 681-8433, or drop in at the office at 8401 Woodway, just east of West Loop.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE BIRDWATCHER by Kimball Garrett (Western Tanager, July-Aug., 1980)

A unique attribute of the science of ornithology--the study of birds--is the degree to which the amateur, untrained in the disciplines of biology, can contribute to empiricism and theory alike. Many landmark studies and guides have been authored by persons with little or no formal training in ornithology. Massive data collection efforts, such as Christmas Bird Counts, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Breeding Bird Surveys, Audubon Breeding Bird and Winter Bird Plot Censuses, the Cornell Nest Record Program, and the American Birds Regional Distributional Reports, depend almost completely on the efforts of volunteer amateurs. This heroic contribution is possible because proficiency at bird identification requires little academic training, and this proficiency is the cornerstone of bird data gathering.

While field marks and behavior patterns of individual birdwatchers vary to an astonishing degree, all are united by a common potential to contribute to an advancement of our knowledge of birds. Motivations and goals of birdwatchers are about as varied as the facial patterns of alternate plumaged Ruddy Turnstones or the songs of Bewick's Wrens. Some birders might be likened to a sallying Olive-sided Flycatcher, actively darting after a prey item (in the birder's case, an interesting bird) within easy reach of the home perch. Others recall a sandgrouse, with regular long-distance flights for a fix of a vital resource (for the sandgrouse, water; for the birder, some lost warbler in Death Valley on Memorial Day weekend). There are the birding jaegers who wait for another birder to locate an interesting species and then close in for their share. And, happily, there are the gleaning creepers who search every nook and cranny on their home territory to turn up whatever they can. Some birders, like waxwings, are highly social; others resemble the most solitary raptors. There are storm-petrels among birders who come ashore only when conditions or urges dictate; and in contrast, there are the birders who are as comfortable on the open ocean as a roadrunner.

This variation in birdwatchers is a simple consequence of human nature. But any birder, from loon to bunting, enjoys that potential position of contributing knowledge to further the state of the art and the science. Previous "Closer Look" articles [This is the concluding article in that series... Ed.] have summarized our knowledge of some field challenges below the species level, while posing a few questions along the way. Let me conclude this series by suggesting a few additional challenges for the birder. No lone birder will master any of these challenges, but light can be shed on each of them. Birdwatchers particularly interested in any field problem should consult their local museum, university, ornithological club, or Audubon society for advice on investigating the problem and publishing the results.

[Mr. Garrett listed some examples, most applicable to California birds or birds in breeding areas. He concludes by suggesting, as a personal exercise, picking a small, easily definable problem. He believes that sorting out the facts, and the underlying evolutionary bases, will be rewarding, challenging, and very stimulating. Have you noticed a behavior pattern that puzzled you, or a repeated plumage variation in the same species? Do some digging into the subject and let THE SPOONBILL have the results of your research. Ed.]

MINUTES OF OG MEETING, AUGUST 7, 1980

Ron Braun opened the meeting by welcoming visitors and members and awarding certificates of appreciation to 1979-80 officers. The following announcements were made by various members:

- 1) The Treasurer's Report showed a balance on hand June 1, 1980, of \$2,642.20. Income during the month of June totaled \$233.27. Expenses totaled \$1,246.60 (printing of checklists was \$1,183.00) leaving a balance on hand, July 31, 1980, of \$1,628.87.
- 2) Little Thicket Sanctuary Visitor's Day will be Labor Day weekend, Aug. 29, 30, 31. Camping allowed.
- 3) Two field trips scheduled: (1) Aug. 30, Galveston and Bolivar Flats, meet at Kempner Park at 7:30 a.m. (2) Sept. 20, meet at 7:30 a.m. at Anahuac or east side of Bolivar Ferry, then both groups meet at noon in High Island at roadside park to compare notes.
- 4) A motion was made and seconded to contribute funds to purchase a tape recording machine which will be used to "advertise" bird news to anyone calling that phone number. HAS has agreed to share expenses. Our share: \$150 initial cost, then half of monthly phone bill. Location will be decided later.
- 5) Margaret Jones announced her coming retirement as Editor of THE SPOONBILL and spoke of the urgent need to establish a typing pool immediately to insure continued publication of THE SPOONBILL, also the need of a mimeograph operator. She feels the involvement of more people as typists together with someone to store and operate the mimeograph will make the new Editor's job much easier and less time-consuming.
- 6) A discussion was held on the advisability of buying a stencil-maker, which would enable photographs, drawings, graphs, etc. to be reproduced in conjunction with typed copy. With all monies in the Treasury earmarked for other purposes, ways and means for this investment (possibly \$2,000) will be researched and discussed later.
- 7) January's OG meeting will be the second Thursday rather than the first.
- 8) Please make sure that all cans turned in for recycling are 100% aluminum, and crush them if possible.

Ron Bisbee, Manager of the Brazoria and San Bernard Wildlife Refuges, presented a very interesting program on the importance of our wetlands as exemplified by these two refuges. Most welcome news: two brown pelicans have been successfully hatched at San Bernard NWR. The young are about 6 weeks old and will soon be banded. Parents are unbanded birds, origins not known to biologists monitoring brown pelicans on the Texas coast.

Respectfully submitted, Barbara Darr, Acting Secretary

PELICANS SPORT CANARY COLOR from TP&W Newsletter, July 30, 1980

Almost adolescent white pelicans have been banded and dyed bright yellow by wildlife biologists of the TP&W department and volunteers from the Rockport-Corpus Christi area.

Although approximately 12,000 to 14,000 white pelicans winter on the Texas Coast, the colony south of Corpus Christi is the only native flock and contains some 200 pairs of birds, John Smith, biologist, said. The banding and marking effort is expected to reveal where the native birds travel.

Smith said 50 birds were banded and stained last year. Of the 50, 11 were spotted in South Texas, four were sighted by Audubon Society Biologist David Blankinship on the Yucatan Peninsula and two were found dead.

TOS NEWSLETTER EDITOR COVERS 1979-1980 TEXAS CHRISTMAS COUNTS

Kelly Bryan is adding some new sparkle to the TOS newsletter in the April-May issue just received. He has done a masterful job of covering Texas 1979-80 Christmas Counts, giving facts, figures, results, and pulling it all together. The composite list is especially interesting, giving number of counts recording each species, total for each species for the state, and high count and location. We hope this will be an annual issue.

CLEARING HOUSE, July 1980

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. Sightings made outside this area are not included in the CH. How to read the CH: Species: Location--(how many)date, observers. Those common species which can be readily identified and are widely distributed in the UTC will also be listed, followed by number of reports, with lowest and highest numbers seen in parenthesis, i.e. (1-42). If any of these species is reported in unusual habitat or numbers that will be noted separately. You will note some dates underlined, this will denote a late date, or possibly an early date. An underlined location denotes unusual location or habitat.

Grebe, Pied-billed: Bolivar--(2)18,TE; Ft. Bend--(6)27,BC
 Pelican, White: Galveston Bay--(4)June 7,FC; Anahuac--(25,SC
 Cormorant, Olivaceous: Galveston--(24)7,CSu, (2)20; W.Harris Co.--(2)20,CSu; Bolivar--(10)18,TE, (3)27,A&RB; Port Arthur--(5)12,CSu&DC; Galveston Bay--(50 pair) June 7,FC
 Anhinga: Buckhorn Lake--(1)18,TE; W.Harris Co.--(2)28,PJ; Winnie--(1)30,SC
 Frigatebird, Magnificent: Galveston Bay--(1)June 7,FC; San Luis Pass--(1)20,A&RB; East Bay--(5)19,SC
 Great Blue Heron: 9 reports (1-9); Galveston Bay--(400-135 nests)June 7,FC
 Heron, Green: 14 reports (1-15)
 Heron, Little Blue: 7 reports (1-15)
 Egret, Cattle: 18 reports (2-300)
 Egret, Reddish: Bolivar--(16)4,CSu, (8)18,TE, (10)27,A&RB; Texas City--(1)19,CSu; Galveston Bay--(15 nests)June 7,FC; Pelican Island--(1)19,FC&WP
 Egret, Great: 15 reports (1-50)
 Egret, Snowy: 11 reports (1-200)
 Heron, Louisiana: 14 reports (1-20)
 Night Heron, Black-crowned: 5 reports (1-6)
 Night Heron, Yellow-crowned: Bolivar--(3)18,TE; Ft. Bend--(2)27,BG; Pt. Arthur--(1)12,CSu&DC; Bear Creek Park--(1)8,A&RB; ELMNS--(2 young)1,ES
 Bittern, Least: Bolivar--(2)18,TE; Galveston Co.--(1)13,H&EMc; Sea Rim State Park--(10)13,CSu&DC; Pelican Island--(1)19,FC&WP; Chambers Co.--(1)30,SC
 Stork, Wood: Ft. Bend--(16)20,SW; High Is.--(48)23,SC
 Ibis, White-faced: 12 reports (1-60); Galveston Bay--(110)June 7,FC
 Ibis, White: 6 reports (1-20); Galveston Bay--(150)June 7,FC
 Spoonbill, Roseate: 8 reports (1-175); Galveston Bay--(125-25adult, 100 Imm.) June 7, FC
 Goose, Canada: W.Harris Co.--(1)20,CSu
 Whistling Duck, Black-bellied: Ft. Bend--(2)27,BG
 Whistling Duck, Fulvous: Chambers Co.--(2)18,TE, (1)30,SC
 Duck, Mottled: 10 reports (1-75)
 Teal, Blue-winged: Anahuac--(2)18,TE; Ft. Bend--(20)27,BG
 Vulture, Turkey: 5 reports (1-10)
 Vulture, Black: 2 reports (2-10)
 Kite, Mississippi: Spring Creek Park--(2)17,WC; Ft. Bend--(2)11,BG, (5)28,PJ
 Hawk, Red-tailed: Westfield--(1)5,P&MJ, (1)20,MJ; Ft. Bend--(2)11,BG
 Hawk, Red-shouldered: Chambers Co.--(2)18,TE; Ft. Bend--(2)27,BG, (1)28,PJ
 Hawk, Swainson's: Westfield--(1)5,P&MJ; Dickson--(1)16,DMc; Johnston Space Center--(2)16,24,EM; W.Harris Co.--(1)2,ES
 Hawk, Marsh: Texas City--(1)19,CSu; McFaddin Marsh--(1)10,SC
 Bobwhite: 11 reports (1-28)
 Rail, King: Chambers Co.--(1)18,TE, (1)8,11,23,30,SC; W.Harris Co.--(7-2 ad.5 ch.) 28,PJ; Alvin--(1)19,FC&WP; Anahuac--(2)30,SC
 Rail, Clapper: 8 reports (1-4)
 Gallinule, Purple: Anahuac--(3)18,TE; Chambers Co.--(1)9,11,22,29,SC
 Gallinule, Common: Galveston--(3)6,CSu; Bolivar--(1)18,TE; Mercury Dr.--(4)29,WC; Ft. Bend--(2)27,BG; Anahuac--(2)27,A&RB; Chambers Co.--(1)23,29,(4-3 chicks)30,SC
 Coot, American: Galveston--(1)6,CSu; Bolivar--(1)18,TE; Ft. Bend--(50)27,BG; W. Harris Co.--(1)28,PJ; Anahuac--(1)27,A&RB
 Oystercatcher, American: Bolivar--(5)6,CSu, (1)27,A&RB; Galveston Bay--(3)June 7, FC (very low)
 Plover, Semipalmated: Bolivar--(15)18,TE, (1)27,A&RB; Mercury Dr.--(2)29,WC
 Plover, Piping: Bolivar--(15)18,TE; San Luis Pass--(3)20,A&RB
 Plover, Snowy: Bolivar--(1)18,TE
 Plover, Wilson's: Bolivar--(60)4,CSu, (75)18,TE; *Ft. Bend Co.--(2)27,BG (unusual location); Pt. Arthur--(3)12,CSu&DC; Anahuac--(2)22,SC. (*The Wilson's Plover in Texas is for the most part a strict coastal resident. Oberholser lists no record of Wilson's Plover from Ft. Bend Co., and in fact, lists only one interior sighting for the entire state--that of a single bird sighted in Midland Co. in 1958--CH ED.)

Killdeer: 18 reports (1-100)
 Plover, Black-bellied: Bolivar--(10)4,CSu, (25)18,TE, (1)27,A&RB
 Turnstone, Ruddy: Bolivar--(2)4,CSu, (3)27,A&RB
 Curlew, Long-billed: Bolivar--(5)6,CSu, (5)18,TE, (5)27,A&RB; Texas City--(5)19, CSu; Chambers Co.--(5)22,(6)30,SC
 Whimbrel: Bolivar--(1)27,A&RB
 Sandpiper, Spotted: High Is.--(1)27,A&RB; Anahuac--(1)21,SC
 Willet: 10 reports (5-80); Ft.Bend--(2)27,BG (unusual location)
 Yellowlegs, Greater: Bolivar--(20)18,TE; Mercury Dr.--(1)29,WC; Winnie--(4)22,SC; Chambers Co.--(6)30,SC
 Yellowlegs, Lesser: Chambers Co.--(100)18,TE, (20)30,SC; Mercury Dr.--(10)29,TE; Ft.Bend--(3)27,BG; W.Harris Co.--(3)28,PJ; Bolivar--(4)27,A&RB
 Knot, Ted: Bolivar--(2)18,TE, (2)27,A&RB
 Sandpiper, Pectoral: W.Harris Co.--(1)28,PJ; High Is.--(2)27,A&RB; Chambers Co.--(10)30,SC
 Sandpiper, Least: Bolivar--(100)18,TE
 Dowitcher, Short-billed: Bolivar--(60)18,TE
 Dowitcher, Long-billed: Galveston--(8)20,A&RB
 Dowitcher, sp.: Bolivar--(2)4,CSu
 Sandpiper, Stilt: Mercury Dr.--(19)29,WC
 Sandpiper, Semipalmated: Bolivar--(30)18,TE
 Sandpiper, Western: Bolivar--(26)4,CSu, (50)18,TE; Mercury Dr.--(300)29,WC; Chambers Co.--(1)30,SC
 Godwit, Marbled: *Bolivar--(4)4,CSu, (5)18,TE; Galveston--(1)20,A&RB. (*Marbled Godwit is an uncommon UTC resident in the summer, being found on most coastal field trips in small numbers....particularly Rollover Pass, Bolivar Flats and Sportsman's Road. --CH Ed.)
 Sanderling: Bolivar--(50)4,CSu, (20)18,TE, (55)27,A&RB
 Avocet, American: Bolivar--(5)4,CSu; Mercury Dr.--(60)29,WC; Ft.Bend Co.--(2)27,BG
 Stilt, Black-necked: 11 reports (2-100)
 Phalarope, Wilson's: Mercury Dr.--(1)29,WC
 Gull, Herring: Bolivar--(4)18,TE
 Gull, Ring-billed: Bolivar--(1)4,CSu, (10)18,TE; Texas City--(7)19,CSu
 Gull, Laughing: 11 reports (8-3500); Galveston Bay--(26,500 nesting pairs)(June 7,FC
 Tern, Gull-billed: Pelican Is.--(6-nesting)19,FC&WP
 Tern, Forster's: 3 reports (1-50)
 Tern, Least: Bolivar--(75)4, (10-w/young)6,CSu, (125)18,TE; Galveston--(1)6,CSu; Texas City--(60)19,CSu; Mercury Dr.--(3)29,WC; Pt.Arthur--(12-4 young)12,CSu&DC; San Luis Pass--(17-one nest)20,A&RB; East Bay--(35)19,SC; McFaddin Marsh--(5)23,SC
 Tern, Royal: 6 reports (4-190); Galveston Bay--(1,450 nesting pairs)June 7,FC
 Tern, Sandwich: Bolivar--(60)4,CSu, (10)18,TE, (1)27,A&RB; Galveston Bay--(300) June 7,FC
 Tern, Caspian: Bolivar--(12)4,CSu, (1)18,TE, (3)27,A&RB; Galveston Bay--(195 nesting pairs)June 7,FC
 Tern, Black: 11 reports (2-75)
 Skimmer, Black: 8 reports (1-800)
 Dove, Rock: 6 reports (8-40)
 Dove, Mourning: 22 reports (1-87)
 Dove, Ringed Turtle: Bellaire--(6-8)all month,PJ; Algoa--(1)3-4,DW; ELMNS--(1)22, ES
 Dove, Inca: 5 reports (1-2). (*Hard to believe that this represents the Inca Dove population on the UTC! --CH Ed.)
 Cuckoo, Yellow-billed: 20 reports (1-14)
 Owl, Barn: Meyerland--(1)all month,P&MJ; High Is.--(1)5,SC; Anahuac--(1)28,SC
 Owl, Screech: City--(3)18,TE - present all month
 Owl, Barred: Ft.Bend Co.--(2)27,BG
 Nighthawk, Common: 17 reports (1-75)
 Swift, Chimney: 8 reports (1-50)
 Hummingbird, Ruby-throated: Chambers Co.--(3)18,TE; Ft.Bend Co.--(2)11,BG; ELMNS--(1)15,ES
 Hummingbird, Rufous: *City--(1)20, present all month,ER (*Ellen said that probably the same individual has returned to her yard during July for the past three years)
 Kingfisher, Belted: Bolivar--(1)18,TE; (1)27,A&RB; Ft. Bend Co.--(1)27,BG; Chambers(1)29,(1)30,SC
 Flicker, Common (Yellow-shafted) White Oak Bayou--(2)all month WC
 Woodpecker, Pileated: W.Harris Co.--(1)14,A&RB
 Woodpecker, Red-bellied: 6 reports (1-10)
 Woodpecker, Hairy: (1)8,A&RB; ELMNS--(1)15,ES
 Woodpecker, Red-headed: Chambers Co.--(15)18,TE; Ella Blvd.--(1)22,WC; White Oak Bayou--(1)30,WC; Beaumont--(12)12,CSu&DC
 Woodpecker, Downy: 4 reports (2-5)
 Kingbird, Eastern: 16 reports (1-125)

Flycatcher, Scissor-tailed: 22 reports (1-67)
 Flycatcher, Great-crested: Spring Creek Park--(1)17,WC; Ella Blvd.--(1)all month, TE; W.Harris Co.--(1)28,PJ
 Empidonax, sp.: Anahuac--(1)28,(2)30,SC
 Lark, Horned: Bolivar--(1)18,TE; *Ft.Bend Co.--(10)27,BG--unusual summer location (The Texas Horned Lark, recognized by a generous suffusion of yellow on the throat and face, is apparently a strict coastal breeder on the UTC. Oberholser lists no breeding record from Ft.Bend Co. The Prairie Horned Lark, with the yellow limited to the throat, is a winter resident in the prairie regions of the UTC, and typically arrives in early November. --CH Ed.)
 Swallow, Bank: Anahuac--(1)29,(70)30,SC
 Swallow, Rough-winged: Anahuac--(14)27,A&RB
 Swallow, Barn: Bolivar--(10)18,TE; Intercontinental Airport--(1)12,WC; Ft.Bend Co.--(4)28,PJ; W.Harris Co.--(15)28,PJ; Anahuac--(10)21,(6)22,(45)29,(100)30,SC; McFaddin Marsh--(6)23,SC
 Swallow, Cliff: Anahuac--(2)30,SC--unusual summer location (early migrant?)
 Martin, Purple: *22 reports (1-200). (*No large staging area reported this year)
 Jay, Blue: 12 reports (1-15)
 Crow, Common: Chambers Co.--(10)18,TE; Ft.Bend Co.--(10)11,(30)27,BG, (6)28,PJ; Beaumont--(2)12,CSu&DC
 Crow, Fish: Beaumont--(1)12,CSu&DC
 Chickadee, Carolina: 4 reports (4-25)
 Titmouse, Tufted: 4 reports (1-10)
 Nuthatch, Brown-headed: White Memorial Park--(5)18,TE
 Wren, Carolina: W.Harris Co.--(5)20,CSu; Chambers Co.--(25)18,TE; Garden Oaks--(2) all month, TE; Ft.Bend Co.--(2)27,BG; Beaumont--(4)12,CSu&DC; Bellaire--(1)1,PJ
 Mockingbird: 16 reports (1-100)
 Catbird, Gray: Anahuac--(1)30,SC
 Thrasher, Brown: Algoa--(1-2)5-29,DW
 Robin, American: *Garden Oaks--(1-10, with young)all month,TE; Spring Creek Park--(1)17,WC. (*The American Robin is among the most common resident song birds in my neighborhood. They raised three broods of young this year. --CH Ed.)
 Thrush, Wood: W.Harris Co.--(1)20,CSu; White Oak Bayou--(1)13,WC
 Bluebird, Eastern: Ft. Bend--(2)11,BG
 Shrike, Loggerhead: 17 reports (1-22)
 Starling: 14 reports (6-173)
 Vireo, White-eyed: Chambers Co.--(10)18,TE; Beaumont--(3)12,CSu&DC
 Vireo, Yellow-throated: White Memorial Park--(1)18,TE
 Vireo, Red-eyed: White Memorial Park--(2)18,TE
 Warbler, Black-and-white: White Memorial Park--(3)18,TE; Beaumont--(2)12,CSu&DC; High Is.--(2)23,SC; Anahuac--(1)30,SC
 Warbler, Swainson's: Ft. Bend--(1)11,BG
 Warbler, Yellow: Anahuac--(1)30,SC
 Warbler, Yellow-throated: Beaumont--(1)12,CSu&DC
 Warbler, Pine: White Memorial Park--(25)18,TE; Houston--(1)20,TE
 Warbler, Prairie: Anahuac--(1)30,SC
 Yellowthroat, Common: 5 reports (1-7)
 Sparrow, House: 18 reports (2-300)
 Meadowlark, Eastern: 18 reports (1-40)
 Black, Red-winged: 17 reports (20-1200)
 Oriole, Orchard: Bellaire--(1)2-13,P&MJ; Chambers Co.--(40)18,TE, (1)9,SC; White Oak Bayou--(2)13,WC; Dickinson--(2)16,H&EMc; Ft. Bend Co.--(1)27,BG; Beaumont--(2)12,CSu&DC; W.Harris Co.--(3)28,PJ; Anahuac--(8)30,SC
 Grackle, Boat-tailed: Anahuac--(150)18,TE; Bolivar--(3)27,A&RB; McFaddin Marsh--(10)23,SC; Chambers Co.--(2)8,(6)11,SC
 Grackle, Great-tailed: 14 reports (2-104)
 Grackle, Common: 11 reports (1-200)
 Cowbird, Brown-headed: 12 reports (3-100)
 Tanager, Summer: Bolivar--(10)18,TE; Spring Creek Park--(3)17,WC; Ft.Bend Co.--(4)27,BG
 Cardinal: 17 reports (1-40)
 Bunting, Indigo: Bolivar--(1)18,TE; Mercury Dr.--(1)29,WC
 Bunting, Painted: Sheldon Reservoir--(4)18,TE; Ft.Bend Co.--(3)11,(3)27,BG; High Is.--(2)23,SC; Chambers Co.--(2)8,(1)9,(3)11,(1)30,SC; Anahuac--(1)30,SC
 Dickcissel: W.Harris Co.--(10)20,CSu, (16)28,PJ; Anahuac--(5)18,TE, (1)22,(3)29,SC; Ft.Bend Co.--(2)11,(4)27,BG, (2)28,PJ; Chambers Co.--(1-3)9-30,SC
 Sparrow, Henslow's: Mykawa Rd.--(4)19,FC&WP
 Sparrow, Seaside: 3 reports (1-2)

Clearing House Contributors, July 1980: A&RB--Ann & Ray Booth; DC--Diane Cabiness; SC--Steve Calver; FC--Fred Collins; WC--Wesley Cureton; TE--Ted Eubanks Jr.; BG--Bernd Gravenstein; MJ--Margaret Jones; PJ--Paul Jones; DM--David Marrack; DMc--Doris McHenry; EMc--Elric McHenry; HMc--Heath McHenry; WP--Walter Piper; ER--Ellen Red; ES--Ena E. Spalding; CSu--Colin Summerhayes; SW--Steve Williams

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Send bird records for Clearing House before 3rd of month to:
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