



THE SPOONBILL

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COMING EVENTS

Thursday
Aug. 4 OG regular meeting, 7:30 P.M., Fonde Recreation Center, Memorial Drive at Sabine. For this, our first meeting of the new season, Bob Moulton has arranged a program of much interest: a slide program on the Big Bend area, compiled by the Chihuahuan Desert Research Center at Alpine. This organization has done much study and research in this area, so we can look forward to more than just a travelogue. We want to urge new members and any non-member subscribers in the area to meet with us.

Saturday
Aug. 27 OG regular field trip. The Houston Arboretum is the setting for this, our annual bird walk, which starts off the fall season of birding. The OG is compiling a checklist of birds of the Arboretum under the direction of Wes Cureton and Ted Eubanks, Jr, and this will be an opportunity to become familiar with this spot so that we may assist with this project in the future. Meet in the Arboretum parking lot at 8:45 A.M. (The Arboretum entrance is on Woodway, just east of the West Loop).

MORE ON THE WETLANDS PRESERVATION PROGRAM

Last month the SPOONBILL carried a notice of a public hearing by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service explaining their proposal to save and protect some wetlands along the Texas coast. Jim Morgan, David Dauphin and Ted Eubanks, Jr. attended this meeting, and Ted sent the following account to the SPOONBILL.

"Over 75% of the Central Flyway's waterfowl population winters within the confines of the Texas Gulf Coast, the total number of individuals being between four and seven million. Many of these hosting wetlands, however, are presently threatened with destruction as the result of industrial and commercial development, and drainage for agricultural purposes. To prevent further erosion of wintering waterfowl habitat, therefore, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (F&WS) is initiating a wetlands preservation program on the Texas Gulf Coast.

"The F&WS introduced the wetlands preservation program to Harris County residents with a public meeting held at Rice University on June 9. Bob Karges, acquisition biologist, and Tom Smith, a real estate specialist, both from the southwest regional office of the F&WS in Albuquerque, N.M., outlined the program at the meeting.

"The F&WS is interested in preserving key waterfowl habitat on the Texas Gulf Coast, either through purchase or through negotiated restrictive easements. A study to identify the key waterfowl areas on the coast was recently completed, and involved input from state and federal biologists, qualified individuals and private organizations. The 25 identified areas were then ranked as to their value as waterfowl habitat, and the threat to their destruction, both long and short-term, was then analyzed. Those wetlands that are purchased will become national wildlife refuges, of which there are presently only five on the Texas Gulf Coast. Those lands preserved through restrictive easements, however, will remain in private hands.

"Funding for the program is to come from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (MBCF), whose resources are derived from the sale of duck stamps. Because of the urgency of the situation a \$9 million loan against future duck stamp sales has been approved by Congress, and provides for the acquisition of restrictive easements on Texas wetlands. This law requires that the funds be spent by Sept. 30, 1977, or else the money reverts to the MBCF to be used in other areas nationally.

"Perhaps of greatest interest to the SPOONBILL readership is that eight of these key wetland parcels are located in the UTC, six of which are ranked in the top ten as to

their value to migratory waterfowl. These parcels total over 120,000 acres, and include: McFaddin and Sea Rim Marshes in Jefferson County; Oyster Bayou, Robinson Bayou and Lake Surprise Marshes in Chambers County; Hall's Bayou Marsh in Galveston Co.; and Slop Bowl, Hoskins Mound and Perry Marshes in Brazoria County.

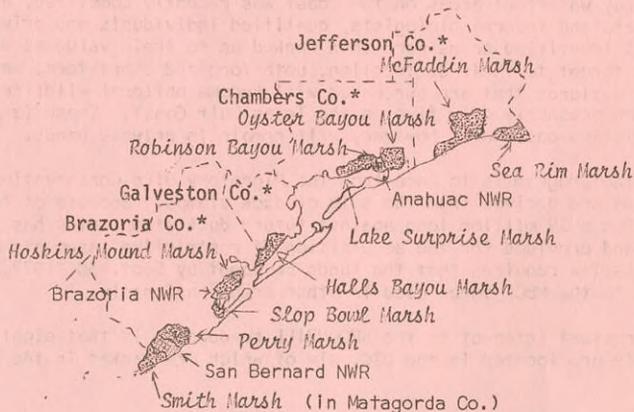
"Although the F&WS wetland acquisition program is still in its infancy, progress in some regions is being made. The F&WS, working in conjunction with the Nature Conservancy, is presently purchasing Smith Marsh in Matagorda County, has negotiated an option on McFaddin Marsh in Jefferson County and is actively negotiating with the owners of Sea Rim Marsh.

"This wintering waterfowl resource preservation program will benefit the local communities in a number of ways. Fishermen, both commercial and sporting, will benefit because the nursing grounds for shrimp, redfish and other game fish will be protected. The local waterfowl hunter will gain as well, for besides the obvious protection of wetlands for future generations of hunters, as much as 405 of the lands purchased will be open to public hunting. Since much of the desired property is open to hunting only on a lease basis, the result will be a net increase in public hunting area. The local tourist industry should be enhanced by the sportsmen traveling into the community to hunt and fish.

"Although the property acquired under this program will be withdrawn from county tax rolls, the law requires annual payment by the government of 25% of the land's gross income, or 75% of its value, whichever is greater, to the county for roads and schools. The F&WS said that this sum is usually much greater than what the county received when the land was on the tax rolls.

"And what can Ornithology Group members, interested in both the scientific and aesthetic value of wintering waterfowl, and Houston Outdoor Nature Club members, professing to "work toward the establishment and maintenance of nature sanctuaries and natural preserves", do to insure the acceptance and success of this program? First, and perhaps most importantly, state, county and local public officials must be made aware of public support for the endeavor. Both the Governor of Texas, as well as the county commissioners in the county where a purchase is to be made, have veto power over any F&WS land acquisition. Since their knowledge of public opinion comes mainly from the mail they receive, letters to these officials expressing support of the program will be quite helpful. Secondly, the funds for the MBCF come solely from the sale of duck stamps. The five dollar annual fee is certainly a small enough sum to pay for the many hours of waterfowl birding that is done in the area yearly. And thirdly, local conservation groups need to be informed of membership support for the program, so a coordinated plan of action can be created by the respective boards. The success or failure of the F&WS waterfowl habitat acquisition program depends on the degree of public support that is aroused, so for the sake of future generations of birders, fishermen, hunters and naturalists, please take a stand and express your support today." --Ted Eubanks, Jr.

The SPOONBILL editor believes one of the most vital points in favor of the wetlands preservation program is the part it will play in lessening future pollution and deterioration of our bays, which will not only benefit us now, but future generations of all. So please write Governor Briscoe, and also the county authorities who have this veto power in their counties, and let them know how important you think this is. For county officials, address your letters to: The Honorable County Judge and County Commissioners, Brazoria County Courthouse, Angleton, Texas; Chambers County Courthouse, Anahuac, Texas; or Jefferson County Courthouse, Beaumont, Texas. And buy your Duck Stamp at your nearest postoffice. Please support this program!



LIBRARY NEWS by Avis Brister

Going to Hawaii anytime soon? The OG Library now has--courtesy of Jim Beaty--a booklet describing Hawaii's Birds, along with a checklist. Both were published by the Hawaii Audubon Society and were obtained by Jim when he went to Hawaii this past June. This booklet will be a valuable aid to anyone planning a future trip to our 50th state. Thanks, Jim.

We also have, courtesy of David Riskind of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, a number of the new checklist, "Birds of Huntsville State Park". These will be available at our August 4 meeting, or call Avis at 681-6456.

HAWAII by Jim Beaty

Margaret, Andy, and Robert Anderson, Norma Oates, Bessie Cornelius and myself joined 38 members of the Dallas County Audubon Society for a birding trip to Hawaii.

On June 1st we arrived in Honolulu in the late afternoon and during the bus ride from the airport to the hotel we spotted our first Barred Doves, Spotted Doves and Mynahs.

After checking in at the hotel we started looking around a nearby park where several Red-Crested Cardinals were seen along with Japanese White-Eyes plus more Mynahs and Doves. The bird of the day was the very beautiful White or Fairy Tern that was sailing around above us.

The next day we visited several different locations over the island in search of birds. Some of the birds that we found during the day were Red-Footed Booby, Red-Vented Bulbul, Spotted Munia, Java Sparrow, Black-Headed Mannikin and Shama Thrush. Also most of the group got to see the Pin-Tailed Whydah before several very large dogs ran us and the birds out of the front yard of a home in Honolulu.

The next day we flew to the island of Kauai. The highlight of the day was the visit to the Kilauea Light House. On the cliffs around and below the light house we saw nesting Brown Boobies. Overhead Frigatebirds sailed along with the Boobies and White-tailed Tropicbirds. At least 1 red-Tailed Tropicbird was seen in the air above. On the way back, the fields were just full of Short-eared Owls. During the day we also had seen the Hawaiian sub-species of the Coot, Stilt and Gallinule. The following day we headed up to the high country and Kokee State Park in search of some of the native Hawaiian birds. In the forest area we found the Elepaio (a brown bird with a bright white rump), I'iwi (a bright vermilion bird with black wings and a long curved salmon colored bill), Apapane (a crimson bird with black wings and a white rump). We spend the night in cabins and almost everyone had a fire going in the fireplace as it was a bit chilly in the high and damp forest.

Our next stop was the island of Maui. On the way to Haleakala National Park some of the birds seen along the side of the road were Skylarks, Ring-necked Pheasants and Chukars. At a ranger station we got to see a pair of Nene Geese that they had on display.

From Maui we flew to the "Big Island", Hawaii. The highlight of our stay on this island was the day and night we spent in the Hawaiian Volcanoes National Park. Even though the volcanoes were inactive at this time it was an exciting and fantastic place to see. The birding here was interesting because we were looking down on the birds from the edge of the crater. In this area we saw many of our "old friends" we had seen before, but much closer.

This was a very interesting and exciting trip. We spent 8 nights on 4 islands, saw many beautiful sights, took lots of pictures and saw many beautiful new birds. Birding in Hawaii presents two major problems to the birder. The first is trying to identify that unusual bird and the second is once you have identified it, how in the world do you pronounce its name???

AROUND AND ABOUT

** David Dauphin has this to say about a Breeding Bird Survey: "We were asked to participate in a Breeding Bird Survey for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Ted Eubanks, Jr. and I were not all that thrilled, but what else can you do in June? Getting up at 3:00 A.M. to pick up Ted so we can go count 44 House Sparrows and 73 Meadow larks is not my idea of fun. We began our pre-designated route in Brazoria County thirty minutes before sunrise. Using a stopwatch (Noel Pettingell would have been proud of us), we listened and looked for 3 minutes, then took 2 minutes to drive one-half mile and listened and looked for three minutes, etc., for 25 miles, and over

four hours! We saw or heard the grand total of 41 species. We agreed we would be happy to do it next year, knowing the importance of breeding bird surveys, but we were happy it would be a year before we did it again!"

** Shocked, amazed, flabbergasted--you name it, the SPOONBILL staff was all of those and more the other day. Paul Jones tells of the experience: "A small dark bird walked out of the grass at Galveston Island State Park on June 28th about noon, just about 100 yards west of the observation platform on the Clapper Rail Trail. It was about 3 or 4 inches long with a slim shape and black feathers overall, the back feathers spotted with white. Only one part of the bird was not black--it had a rust colored nape patch; the eye was red and the bill was black. The little fellow walked calmly toward Margaret and I as I tried to get it in focus for a photograph. Since my 250mm lens will focus down to 13 feet I had to keep backing up to get it in focus. Margaret stood stock still and the bird walked up to her feet, inspected her shoes and socks, then got in the shade between her feet. A BLACK RAIL!!! standing calmly between one's feet--what an experience! Pete Peltier told us later that it had been released the day before by Linda Snyder. Checking with Linda disclosed the background: it was found in the parking lot of the American General Bank Bldg. in Galveston, apparently unhurt, but probably stunned a bit by flying into the building, Linda was called, she took it to her home, kept it two weeks in a box, and, while feeding it, particularly avoided any contact so that it wouldn't be tamed. Tamed, just fearless, or still punch-drunk, the little bird had us in a whirl for awhile!"

** We tell ourselves the birds aren't here in the summer (it is sooo nice to stay home in cool airconditioned comfort, isn't it?), but David Dauphin and Ted Eubanks, Jr. decided to do a Big Day Run July 2, just to see what was around. Well, what was around was a total of 108 species, including a singing male Chestnut-sided Warbler at Scout Woods in High Island, and a Black Rail by the side of a road in Anahuac Refuge!

** Dee Ross sends us a follow-up note on Yellow-crowned Night Heron in response to our item of last month on these birds: "The last date I saw any herons at Edith L. Moore Nature Sanctuary was May 24, at 8 A.M. Two adults were observed standing beside a nest. On June 1 I checked the area in the early A.M. and late P.M. and found no birds, heard no calls, nor saw any guano under the nest sites. This could have only meant that the birds abandoned ELMNS. This may have been caused by several factors: 1. lack of long horizontal live pine branches on which to build nests (the remaining live pines are smaller with shorter, upturned branches); 2. increased sun exposure and heat due to many dead trees (pine bark beetles damaged); 3. decline or lack of feeding areas; 4. some disturbance (shooting, loud noises, etc., though this is least likely).

"I read the questions about the herons' feeding habits in the last SPOONBILL. In 1976 herons were seen feeding in an open field with marshy spots located on Wilcrest near Westheimer. Betsy Massey had observed the birds at this location the early mornings. At this writing the field is a subdivision. In the past two months I have observed herons flying to Rummel Creek between Memorial and Katy Freeway at dusk. This area of the creek is channelized, but with grassy banks. In past years yellow-crowned night herons were seen feeding in Rummel Creek within ELMNS. Possible food sources that I've observed are crayfish, small minnows, young turtles, catfish, bullfrogs and various species of snakes. According to a Texas Parks & Wildlife article in their magazine, September, 1976, crayfish are the preferred food.

"Perhaps the limiting factor for creek or bayou feeding is water turbidity. As increased and widely fluctuating urban runoff comes into Rummel Creek and Buffalo Bayou, the feeding mechanism may be upset. Also increased flow is carried by Buffalo Bayou because of the problems of Addick's Dam seepage. This may create fewer shallow feeding areas. Other feeding areas are rice field ponds and ditches, but these are being "developed" also, thus food sources become fewer and farther from nesting sites.

"These ideas comprise my "theory" on the herons. Undoubtedly many factors affect their population. What do others think?"

A LIFER TO REMEMBER by Margaret Jones

The SPOONBILL and Clearing House editors had a "lifer" in June--their first trip to southeast Arizona. Circumstances dictated the timing--the middle of June--which is admittedly not the most comfortable time to visit that Mecca of all birders. However, due to the ahead-of-time-coaching of our friends, some good luck, and helpful sharing of sightings by birders we met at our various stops, we had an enjoyable and successful trip.

The most spectacular sight was not a bird, however, but a raging forest fire in Carr Canyon, in the Huachuca Mountains. As we passed the Carr Canyon area, headed for the next canyon, Ramsey, we noticed a tall, pencil-thin column of smoke, but thought it was possibly a mining operation or such. Less than an hour later, while walking the trail at Mile Hi Ranch, we glanced up to discover towering clouds of smoke--the Carr Canyon fire (which was to spill into at least three more canyons, consume more than 10,000 acres of prime woodlands, threaten homes (and consume some), and rage out of control for several days) was making its debut. It was quite an experience to watch delicate hummingbirds with one eye and with the other see leaping flames and ugly smoke on the crest of the ridge dividing Carr and Ramsey Canyon, where we were. Briefly we saw a Golden Eagle circling a peak on the ridge, and wondered if a nest was being consumed. (Fortunately Mile Hi Ranch was spared, though the fire, (we later learned) did creep down the slope almost to the road).

Several hummingbirds seen at Mile Hi were lifers, but we learned the White-eared Hummingbird, which had arrived shortly before we did, was considered so rare the Alert had gone out, and Tucson birders were flocking in on our heels.

All of our 34 lifers were exciting, but a nesting Whiskered Owl with two babies (at the edge of the road leading to South Fork Campground), and a nesting Zone-tailed Hawk (northeast of Patagonia on Harshaw Road) are two of our most satisfying memories. When the hawk came off the nest and flew low over our heads as we stood by our car in the road, we were enthralled by the sound as well as the sight, for she screamed defiant insults at us as she circled us, then perched in a low snag about 50 yards away!

UNUSUAL BIRDS REPORTED IN JUNE to David Dauphin

Eared Grebes, all month at Baytown Tunnel, by DD
 Blackburnia Warbler, on June 12, @ W. Galveston, by George Clayton
 Northern Shoveler, on June 12, @ Galveston Island State Park, by George Clayton
 Vermilion Flycatcher, on June 12, in West Harris County, by Margaret Jones
 Lark Sparrows, in June @ Spring Creek Park, by Wes Cureton
 Female American Redstart, on June 18, @ West Galveston, by George Clayton
 Brown Pelican, on June 18, @ W. Galveston, by George Clayton
 Nesting Western Kingbirds, all month, in West Harris Co. †

PLACES TO GO

It is still hot, and probably will get hotter, but it seems that if you get out and bird, you will see some, if not as many as you would like. During the latter part of July shorebirds will be coming back to our beaches, so Freeport, Galveston, and Bolivar will continue to be the most productive places to go.

Some members of the Hale Ranch Park Site survey team have continued to make several visits each month this summer, mainly to check on nesting and suspected nesting species. For instance, two singing male Redstarts have been closely observed but no female has made an appearance, but nesting activity and evidence of successful nesting have been observed of many species. White-tailed Kites have nested successfully, with three immatures being seen among seven of these birds on July 2, and more suspected. Since this project started, team members have made a total of 19 visits to this site, and have a species count of 169. If you wish to accompany a team member to Hale, check with the member or with the editor. There is a procedure we must follow for each visit: prior to a visit, the editor, who is head of the survey team, must be informed; the park manager must be notified; during a visit a tally is kept which includes numbers of each species seen; this tally is sent to the editor who makes a record of it, and then forwards it to TP&W. This project of the OG is an on-going one that should last almost until the park opens several years in the future.

Let me remind you that another project of the OG is the compilation of a checklist of the Houston Arboretum, and you don't have to wait for the Bird Walk scheduled for you to get acquainted with this lovely place in the heart of the city. The gates are open every day from 8:30 A.M. to sunset. Send a record of your sightings to Wes Cureton or Ted Eubanks, Jr.

And don't forget that the Clearing House is an excellent source of places to go. If you keep your issues, check past years to see what was being seen where. Sometimes an overlooked or forgotten birding spot comes to light in this way.

Let me urge you to keep the editor notified of any birding spots you locate that others may enjoy. With some being removed from our list, we need others to take their places.

CLEARING HOUSE June, 1977

How to read the C-H: Name of Bird: location, (how many) date, observers.

- Grebe, Eared: Baytown Tunnel, (3)15,22,D&JD (see notes).
 Pelican, Brown: W. Galveston, (2)18,GC (no field notes)
 Frigatebird, Magnificent: W. Galveston, (2)17,D&SR; (1)28,P&MJ.
 Bittern, Least: Maner Lake, (2)5,J&KMo; Anahuac, (5)11,JMo; High I., (2)11,JMo, (5)18, DD&TE; Brazoria Co., (4)11,19,CM.
 Whistling Duck, Black-bellied: Synott Road, (1)4,A; Ft. Bend Co., (10)5,M, (5)18,B, (4)18,JMo, (2)25,E.
 Whistling Duck, Fulvous: Brazoria Co., (6)12,DD&TE; W. Harris Co., (3)12,CM.
 Teal, Blue-winged: W. Galveston, (4)11,JMo; High I., (4)11,JMo, (4)18,DD&TE; W. Harris Co., (5)12,CM; Ft. Bend Co., (2)18,B.
 Shoveler, Northern: W. Galveston, (1)12,GC.
 Duck, Wood: Ft. Bend Co., (12)5,M.
 Scaup, Lesser: Maner Lake, (4)5,J&KMo.
 Duck, Ruddy: Baytown Tunnel, (5+)15,22,D&JD.
 Kite, White-tailed: Ft. Bend Co., (1)4,CM, (2)5,M, (3)25,E.
 Kite, Mississippi: Ft. Bend Co., (8)4,A, (1)5,E, (5)18,B, (2)18,JMo, (3)25,E; Clute, (1)28,P&MJ.
 Hawk, Red-tailed: Ft. Bend Co., (1)28,P&MJ.
 FALCON, PEREGRINE: W. Harris Co., (1)May 1,15,BL (see notes)
 PHEASANT, RING-NECKED: Anahuac, (1)11,JMo (see notes).
 Rail, Black: Galveston I. State Park, (1)28,P&MJ (see page 4).
 Gallinule, Purple: Maner Lake, (40)5,J&KMo, (2)28,P&MJ; Ft. Bend Co., (1)18,JMo.
 Jacana: Maner Lake, (4)5,J&KMo.
 Oystercatcher, American: Bolivar Flats, (4)18,DD&TE, (1)28,JMo, (1)30,P&MJ.
 Plover, Semipalmated: Bolivar, (3)11,(1)28,JMo, (10)18,DD&TE.
 Plover, Piping: Bolivar Flats, (1)30,P&MJ.
 Turnstone, Ruddy: Bolivar, (6)11,JMo, (1)18,DD&TE, (1)30,P&MJ.
 Curlew, Longbilled: Bolivar, (1)18,DD&TE, (1)26,D&JD, (6)28,JMo; W. Galveston, (1)28, (n/c)30,P&MJ.
 Whimbrel: W. Galveston, (4)May 19,GC; Surfside, (1)28,P&MJ (see notes).
 Yellowlegs, Lesser: High I., (2)11,JMo (see notes); Surfside, (2)28,P&MJ.
 Knot, Red: High I., (2)11,JMo (see notes); Bolivar, (3)18,DD&TE, (1)26,D&JD (see notes).
 DUNLIN: Bolivar, (1)18,JMo (see notes).
 Dowitcher, Short-billed: Bolivar, (1)18,DD&TE; High I., (5)18,DD&TE (see notes).
 Sandpiper, Western: High I., (1)11,JMo (see notes); Bolivar, (10)18,DD&TE.
 Sandpiper, Semipalmated: Bolivar, (2)11,JMo (see notes).
 GODWIT, MARBLED: Bolivar, (10+)18,DD&TE, (1)26,D&JD (see notes).
 Avocet, American: High I., (22)11,JMo.
 Phalarope, Wilson's: W. Harris Co., (9)May 15,GC.
 Gull, Herring: Bolivar, (1)11,JMo, (15)30,P&MJ; Surfside, (4)28,P&MJ.
 Gull, Ring-billed: Bolivar, (5)11,JMo, (2)18,DD&TE, (1)30,P&MJ.
 Tern, Common: Bolivar, (5)11,28,JMo.
 Dove, White-winged: Galveston, (6)11,JMo.
 DOVE, RINGED TURTLE: Bellaire, (1)2,(1)27,P&MJ.
 Roadrunner: Ft. Bend Co., (2)18,B (no field notes).
 Owl, Barn: Rice Campus, (1)25,P&MJ.
 Owl, Barred: Ft. Bend Co., (1)5,JMo, (1)19,CM.
 Hummingbird, Ruby-throated: Ft. Bend Co., (1)25,E.
 Kingfisher, Belted: Isenhower Park, (1)4,WC; Ft. Bend Co., (1)5,M, (1)25,E; Spring Creek Park, (1)7,WC.
 Woodpecker, Hairy: Ft. Bend Co., (1)5,M.
 Kingbird, Western: Shell Lab., W. Harris Co., (1)4,A, (2)5,J&KMo, (2)18,JMo, (2)25,E (see notes)
 FLYCATCHER, VERMILION: W. Harris Co., (1)12,P&MJ (see notes).
 Swallow, Cliff: Oyster Creek, (10)4,A, (10)5,J&KMo, (25+)25,E (see notes).
 Nuthatch, Brown-headed: Yard (Memorial area) (1)4,JMo.
 Robin, American: UH Campus, (5)all month,TE; Spring Creek Park, (2) adult, 1 fledgling 7,WC; Hermann Park, (2)24,WC.
 Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray: Isenhower Park, (1, feeding cowbird)4,WC; High I., (1)18,DD&TE.
 Warbler, Prothonotary: Ft. Bend Co., (10)5,M, (8)18,B, (3)18,JMo, (10)25,E, (5+)5,DD&TE, (1)25,CM; Brazoria, (1)12,DD&TE.
 Warbler, Swainson's: Ed White Park, (1)11,JMo; Ft. Bend Co., (1)18,B; Memorial Park, (1)30,WC.
 WARBLER, BLACKBURNIAN: W. Galveston I., (1)12,GC (no field notes)
 Warbler, Wilson's: W. Galveston, (1)May 8,GC.
 REDSTART, AMERICAN: Ft. Bend Co., (1)18,B, (2)18,JMo, (2)25,E (see notes); W. Galveston, (1)18,GC (no field notes).
 Bunting, Indigo: Ft. Bend Co., (1)5,M, (1)18,JMo, (5)25,E, (1)25,CM.
 Sparrow, Seaside: Anahuac, (3)11,JMo; High I., (3)18,DD&TE.
 Sparrow, Lark: Spring Creek Park, (2)7,WC, (2)12,P&MJ; Ft. Bend Co., (3)25,E.

CLEARING HOUSE CONTRIBUTORS

GC--George Clayton; WC--Wesley Cureton; D&JD--David & Jan Dauphin; TE--Ted Eubanks, Jr. P&MJ--Paul & Margaret Jones; BL--Bill Lindeman; CM--Charlene May; J&KMo--Jim & Kevin Morgan; D&SR--Dee & Steve Ross; A--party of Cory Allen, Ted L. Eubanks, Sr., TE; B--party of Aileen & Bob Moulton, Mary Ann & Bob Moore; E--Party of Ted Eubanks, Sr., WC, DD, TE; M--Party of Marilyn Crane, JMo, Dick Pratt.

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES, JUNE 1977

Grebe, Eared: These birds have summered at this location since Nimmons found them in June, 1975. If you need these birds in full summer plumage, bring a scope and come in the afternoon to the pond on the right, immediately after entering Baytown from the Tunnel. Drive 25 yards and turn to the right on the service road and park up the hill. Birds were small grebes with slender necks, slightly upturned bills, blackish neck, back, sides, and crested head; light below; bright orange ear tufts. Observed copulation in water on 22nd. Excellent light, 15x teles., 25 yards.

--David Dauphin

FALCON, PEREGRINE: Adult slate gray backed bird seen on May 1, on Katy-Hockley Cut-Off Road, near House & Hahl Road in a rice field. Bird flew across road in front of car. Sat on dike about 200 yards from road. Gray wings, falcon profile, white chest, black band through eye. Falcon on May 15 about 100 yards off of House & Hahl Road about 4-6 miles west of Cypress Creek in a muddy rice field eating a bird. Falcon had brown back, definite eye patch, white breast, falcon-like wings. Watched for 20-30 minutes with 20x scope. --Bill Lindeman

PHEASANT, RING-NECKED: Large male bird with very long tail. Purplish head with red surrounding eyes; white neck ring; tawny body plumage, scalloped with white. Seen for 2 minutes with 8x40 binoculars in excellent light. --Jim Morgan

Whimbrel: This bird was seen on tidal flats at north end of the Surfside Bridge in bright sunlight about 20 yards from the road. It was slightly larger than nearby Willets and of similar coloration (grayish), had about a 3-1/2 inch decurved bill and a striped head with white lines running through the eye and middle of top of head. The breast was slightly speckled, and was lighter gray than the back. Side of flanks and edge of folded tail had barring. This bird could only have been a whimbrel due to the lack of rusty or cinnamon coloration, the shorter decurved bill and striping on head. --T. Paul Jones

Yellowlegs, Lesser: Gray and white checked back and wings. Legs were bright yellow. Less than one half the size of nearby avocets. White rump and tail clearly seen in flight. Upon landing they were near Killdeer and were of comparable body size. Seen for 3 minutes with 8x40 binoculars and 20-45x scope in excellent light. --Jim Morgan

Knot, Red: Brownish above, reddish below, chunky, with a short bill. Two birds were in fall plumage, though--light breast, gray back and wings, chunky, short bill. All three were together. Excellent light with 10x50 binocs, 15-60x teles. at 30 yards. --David Dauphin

Chunky body, rusty underparts to undertail coverts; short bill. In flight showed only slight wing stripe and spots at base of tail. These markings in flight and relatively subdued actions eliminated any possibility of these birds being sanderlings. Also, these birds were larger than sanderlings. Seen for 3 minutes with 8x40 binoculars and 20-45x scope in excellent light. --Jim Morgan

DUNLIN: This bird was seen feeding on a mud flat with sanderlings. The bird was picked out by its larger size. Examination of the bird showed rusty back, black belly, light gray breast and dark legs. The bill was relatively long with a slight hook at the end. The bird was in unmistakable summer plumage. Seen at 40-100 feet for 5 minutes in excellent light with 8x40 binoculars. --Jim Morgan

Dowitcher, Short-billed: Long snipelike bills, brownish above, rusty below, spotted not barred sides, lower back and tail formed very light diamond in flight. Seen perched at 15 yards and in flight. --David Dauphin

Sandpiper, Semipalmated: Small peeps feeding on mud flats with picking action, never probing. Black legs, grayish brown back, wings and breast (with streaking). Whitish belly. When in flight, showed black rump and tail stripe. No sharp color contrast in wings. Seen for 5 minutes with 8x40 binocs and 20-45x scope in excellent light. --Jim Morgan

Sandpiper, Western: Small peep with black legs. Grayish brown with a rusty blend on crown and back, more noticeable in flight. Whitish underparts. Streaked breast. Though it could fly, it appeared to have an injured wing. Seen for 10 minutes with 8x40 binocs & 20-45x scope in excellent light. --Jim Morgan

GODWIT, MARBLED: Very large shorebirds. Buffy to brown. Long upturned bill. Dark speckling. All birds were seen feeding at 75 yards. Excellent light, 15-60x teles. --David Dauphin

Owl, Barred: Nest was found on June 5, fledged bird was seen flying from the same tree on June 25th. As Barred Owls are notorious for re-using a nest, we tagged this tree with plastic tape for observation next year. --David Dauphin

Kingbird, Western: Last year, Warren Armstrong suspected nesting Westerns and this year he confirmed an excellent record for the UTC. The birds had gray heads, yellow bellies, black tails with slight white outer tail feathers. They were feeding at least one young in nest on the 25th. --David Dauphin

(Warren Armstrong called to report another nest had been discovered within the Shell Lab property, and 4 young had been fledged. The pair that are nesting on a pole at the edge of the property had not fledged their young at this writing. Armstrong is of the opinion that these are second generation birds that have returned to the hatching site to reproduce. --C-H Editor)

FLYCATCHER, VERMILION: This bird was perched on the wire lines at the side of Katy-Hockley Cut-Off Road just south of its intersection with FM 529. It was seen as we were driving along and we noted the brilliant red plumage of the breast and head, its black wings and tail, and its small size. No other bird of this size and coloration perches on wires that we know of. --T. Paul Jones

Swallow, Cliff: Dark brown wings and tail, faint light stripes at back, rusty rumps, reddish throat, dark crowns, light foreheads, lighter below. Hobart found nesting Cliff Swallows by surfboard three years ago at US 59 and Oyster Creek, and they continue to nest there. The nest sites at one mile south of the intersection of US 59 and Hwy 6, and the nest sites at that intersection are new to the UTC. Feltner predicted this expansion last year.

Photographers can have a field day at the 59-6 intersection. We counted ten nests as we were diving west under the bridge and saw birds going into nests. They should remain here through July. --David Dauphin

REDSTART, AMERICAN: Found in same area as bird seen by Marilyn Crane and Paul and Margaret Jones on May 29. I was attracted by the song, which was not familiar to me. When seen the back and head were black and the belly white. Orange shoulder, wing and tail patches. Fanned tail showing orange on black. After finding one bird I moved down the trail and heard the same type of song with slightly different inflection at end. Saw another male Redstart. Paced off separation of birds and it was 100-125 yards. Moving quickly back and forth I could find both birds singing. I assumed the first bird was not following me and changing his song! Thus, I concluded that 2 birds were there. Total study time of songs and sightings was 30 minutes. Birds seen at 20-50 feet in good light with 8x40 binocs. Are we blessed with nesting Redstarts? Unfortunately I could not find a female or a nest. --Jim Morgan (June 18)

These birds were also seen at this same location by Party B on the 18th, Party E on the 25th, and one singing male was seen here on July 2, by P&MJ, JMo, WC. No female has been seen at this location. --C-H Editor

COMMENT BY CLEARING HOUSE EDITOR

There are 98 species of birds listed as occurring "Abundant" or "Fairly Common" in the UTC Checklist area for the month of June. Sightings were reported by observers during June of 93 of these species. Those not reported are: Clapper Rail, Screech Owl, Yellowthroated Vireo, Kentucky Warbler and Henslow's Sparrow.

Ninety-five of the "commons" are known to regularly nest in the UTC area. (Those not known to reproduce in the area are: Black-bellied Plover, Sanderling and Black Tern). Observers noted nesting or reproductive activity of 32 of the "common" species. It is the opinion of C-H Editor that many of the birds shown as nesters have already fledged young by June, and that some of them are late nesters (i.e., Bobwhite, Wood Duck, Vultures, Doves, and perhaps others).

The summary of occurrence of "Abundant" and "Fairly Common" species for the summer months of June, July and August will be published in the September issue of the SPOONBILL.

INFORMATION NEEDED

The Conservation Group has asked us to aid them in a study of birding trips. At the bottom of this page (placed for easy removal without chopping up your SPOONBILL) you will find a short questionnaire. Please fill this out and return to Mary Gillette as soon as possible. It is important for us to contribute this information to the Conservation Group for a study that may well be, in the future, important to us.

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