



THE SPOONBILL

VOLUME XII, No.4
August, 1964

* Ornithologists know that the best way *
 * to see a large variety of birds is to *
 * walk the ecotones. One study in Texas *
 * revealed that the margins of a forest *
 * clearing had almost twice as many ind- *
 * ividual birds, representing 41% more *
 * species, as the interior of the wood- *
 * land itself. By inhabiting the forest- *
 * edge ecotone, birds get the best of two *
 * worlds - insect food and grass for nest *
 * lining in the meadow, and a chance to *
 * escape from enemies into the protection *
 * of the woods. The reason many people *
 * have large populations of birds in their *
 * gardens is not only that they hang up *
 * feeders, but also that they have pro- *
 * vided shrubs and trees, lawns and flo- *
 * wer beds, artificial pools and the shel- *
 * ters of man's own habitations - in *
 * short, a variety of ecotones within a *
 * small area. *

* From Life Nature Library. "Ecology" *
 * by Peter Farb *

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

COMING EVENTS

September 20 (Sunday) O.G. field trip, Henry Hoffman, leader. Trip to the Freeport area for migrant shorebirds. Meet at the courthouse in Angleton at 9:00 AM.

October 1 (Thursday) Regular O.G. meeting. 7:30 PM at the Downtown Recreation Center. The program will be a travel film, "Springtime in Britain".

October 25 (Sunday) O.G. field trip, leader, Jerry Strickling. Boat trip offshore from Galveston to look for pelagic birds. Cost, \$5.00 per person. For reservation, send \$1.00 to Jerry Strickling, 5118 W. Bellfort, Houston, Texas 77035. Remaining \$4.00 payable on the trip. As in the past, the trip will be aboard the "Captain Doc", a steel hulled vessel licensed for 99 persons, but also as in the past, the trip will be limited to 50 persons. The "Doc" will leave from the Galveston yacht basin at 8:00 AM. To reach the yacht basin, turn left off of Broadway on 11th St. and follow the signs to the "Doc".

ALASKA TRIP Charlotte Johnson

Birdwise, my trip to Alaska was very disappointing. After studying Peterson's Western Bird Guide, I expected to see more common birds in general and more unusual birds in particular than I did. Unfortunately, I was not in the best areas for bird-finding.

Anchorage, June 15-19

In the area between the hotel and shore, much of which was not built-up, I saw Arctic Terns, Bonaparte's, Mew, and Glaucous-winged Gulls, Semipalmated Plovers, Savannah Sparrow, Pintail and seven ducklings, Orange-crowned Warblers, Slate-colored Juncos, Robins, Traill's Flycatcher,

Bohemian Waxwings, Least Sandpipers, Raven, Yellow Warbler, Common Redpolls, Myrtle Warbler, Rusty Blackbirds, Bank, Tree and Olive-green Swallows, Hermit Thrush and Spotted Sandpipers.

My first few minutes of birding in Anchorage a Hermit Thrush perched on a low tree near me and sang his sweet song for many minutes. Another day he did a repeat performance in the same place. One day near the shore as I walked a railroad which runs through the marsh, a Spotted Sandpiper alighted in front of me and did a "rodent run" down the track. This has to be seen to be believed.

Lake Hood - Water airport for amphibious planes. Here in the shadows of the wings of these planes, many Red-necked Grebes were nesting in the reeds at the edge of the water. Nests were large with large eggs. As we approached, the nesting birds covered the nests with fresh greens and slipped into the water, but stayed a few feet from the nests. When the eggs are hatching the Grebes do not leave the nests when people approach, not even when the closest planes start their motors and take-off. These birds have adjusted to man and machine and continue to return and occupy their original nesting and breeding ground at this lake. The full summer plumage of these Grebes was lovely, and that of the four Arctic Loons on the lake was very striking.

Juneau Area, June 20 - Here I added the Bald Eagle, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Northwest Crow and Wilson's Warbler to my Alaskan bird list.

Skagway, June 22 - Here I added the Pine Siskin and Tree Sparrow.

Haines, June 23 - At 9:30 PM in full daylight, we saw low overhead two Bald Eagles. The owner of Helen's gift shop at Haines said there were many Eagles in that vicinity, and that from the highway in a mile and one half she and her son had counted over 200 Bald Eagles on drives many evenings. She said the Eagles come about February and leave in August. During our three hour stay I could not investigate this but it was reassuring to think there could be so many.

Steamer trip to Tracy Arm, June 24 - The most interesting birds identified on this part of the trip were the many, many Pigeon Guillemots and Ruddy Ducks, 4 Harlequin Ducks, 6 Glaucous Gulls.

British Columbia, June 26 - On the steamer route along the edge of Queen Charlotte's Sound were flocks of Common Murres. Here I identified 6 Thick-billed Murres, 2 Tufted Puffins, 1 Common Loon in striking summer plumage.

On the plane I met a Mr. Hoeman from the Smithsonian Institute who had been banding Ruddy Turnstones in the north of Alaska. His group is the only one banding the turnstones at this time. Ordinary aluminum banding wires were used. They are hoping that some of these birds will be found in Hawaii this fall and winter. Any banded turnstones seen in any area would be ones done by his group, so he said.

Letter

We have been waiting for months for a report on the final decision against the Alamo farmer and Edinburg farmer who poisoned thousands of whitewings, estimated by Parks and Wildlife men as 5000 birds, or that many found dead. Papers said there would be further news in two weeks after the event made headline news, but never one word. So I wrote the Parks and Wildlife and got the following reply,

"Reference to your letter of Aug. 10, 1964 in which you inquired about the disposition of the case against the Valley farmer for poisoning whitewings:

It was decided that federal laws provided for a more realistic penalty in this case than did state laws. The case was therefore turned over to federal authorities and filed in Federal Court in Houston, Texas. I am of the opinion that the case is still pending. Federal Court dockets are usually very full and we have no way of knowing how soon such cases will be brought to trial.

Sincerely yours,
Robert G. Mauermann "

I do not see why it was not put in Brownsville courts, nor do I get the meaning, as here used, of the word "realistic". I'd think the State could

be as realistic as need be. I hope you will check on when this is to be in the Houston Federal Courts and let us know when, and the results.

Mrs. D.C. Ring

After some preliminary checking, we discovered that we need the names of the defendants to determine the disposition of the case. If you could get the names of the farmers for us, Mrs. Ring, we will certainly try to find out all we can. The explanation of why the case was moved from state to federal courts does seem to be unnecessarily ambiguous. Surely someone in Austin knows the precise reason. It would be better to state the reason precisely and be done with it than to let anyone interpret the word "realistic" for themselves. We suppose that the change was made because there are probably a different range of penalties available in the Federal Courts than in the State Courts. If there are stiffer penalties available in the Federal Courts, these might be more "realistic" punishment for the offense. However, there is the possibility that there are lighter penalties available in the Federal Courts and the use of the word "realistic" is simply a euphemism for the intention of letting the offenders, if convicted, off with a light penalty. We tend to believe that the former supposition is more likely. These are only two interpretations of what Mr. Mauermann means by "realistic". This kind of ambiguity from public employees is bad. Eds.

COLORADO AGAIN Jim Ellis

I was back in Colorado for a few weeks in . This time I got 16 lifers. I would have had 19 if Western Tanager, Yellow-headed Blackbird and MacGillivray's Warbler had not shown up here this Spring. I managed to get in three days of birding, one in Rocky Mountain National Park, one around Fort Collins, and one around Denver. I only had a little time in Rocky Mountain Park but it produced Violet-green Swallows, Audubon's Warblers and Virginia's Warblers. The next Saturday evening I called a man I had met in Denver previously and learned that he was at a meeting of Colorado bird clubs being held at the Colorado State University in Fort Collins for the purpose of organizing a state-wide ornithological society. I went. I got there just as the Saturday evening meeting was breaking up and in time to find out all about Sunday's field trips. The highlight of the next day was a flock of about 200 Western Grebes on a lake near Fort Collins, many of them demonstrating their nuptial dance. The day produced seven more lifers: Western Wood Pewee, Mountain Plover, McKown's Longspur, California Gull, California Quail, Grey (Hungarian) Partridge, and Brewer's Sparrow. On one other day at Red Rocks Park and Genessee Park near Denver I got Williamson's Sapsucker, Lazuli Bunting, Black-headed Grosbeak, and White-throated Swift. I probably could have added more lifers had I had more time, but Colorado has given me 46 lifers this year and that's enough from one place for awhile. We want to go back, anyhow. Next week we're off to the Big Bend and Davis Mountain Country.

FROM THE PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT

Austin - Aug. History has been made in one of the Parks and Wildlife Dept. demonstration plots along the Gulf Coast. Ten Clutches of bluewing teal were hatched in the J.D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area in Jefferson County, in southeast Texas.

C.D. Stutzenbaker, wildlife biologist for the department, said only a stray bluewing pair or so previously snubbed migration to stay at the 8400 acre state-owned marsh. Stutzenbaker said he used a bird dog to band many of the young teal.

Bluewing teal, the most climate conscious of wild ducks, spend as little time as possible in the northern nesting areas. They usually are the last ducks to leave Texas in the spring and the first to return in the fall. This year returning bluewings were officially checked in on the coast as early as August 8. Stutzenbaker could not account for the unusual behavior of the Murphree Area "star summer boarders" except that water and feed conditions have been excellent. Also abnormally cool weather prevailed until late spring.

Austin - Aug. Hunters harvesting doves in Mexico must comply with varied regulations if they seek to bring the birds into Texas, according to E.A. Walker, assistant director for wildlife in the Parks and Wildlife Department. ...hunters are restricted to a limit of 25 doves in the aggregate taken in Mexico in one calendar week. The calendar week begins on Sunday. ...hunters

must comply with the new regulation requiring that one feathered wing be left on each bird as a means of identification if transported into Texas.

Austin - Aug. Ducks and Geese...will find ideal conditions on a substantial part of the famed Texas Gulf Coast wintering area...the extreme southeastern portion of the coast, from the Louisiana line to Anahuac, will have adequate water and food supplies for the countless thousands of waterfowl...

Other parts of the coastal areas apparently are not as well equipped for the flocks that will surge southward shortly into the most heavily concentrated of all Central Flyway wintering areas. However, recent rains have improved conditions in some locations.

 Along with the latest news releases from the Parks and Wildlife Department was a copy of the pamphlet, "Hunting in Texas 1964 - 1965". We turned immediately to the paragraph headed "Year-Round Hunting". In the 1963-1964 issue of this pamphlet this paragraph read, "Many animals and birds are not protected by the laws of Texas or the United States. These unprotected species may be hunted the year around and provide a great amount of sport for the outdoorsman". The unprotected species were listed in three paragraphs as follows:

"Unprotected Animals - The unprotected animals include snakes, rabbits, armadillos, bats, rats (except muskrats), wolves, coyotes, prairie dogs, ground squirrels, Russian boar, various wildcats and many imported species."

"Unprotected Birds - The unprotected birds include blackbirds, butcher birds (shrikes), buzzards (vultures), crows, duck hawks, goshawks, Cooper's hawks, blue darters, sharp-shinned hawks, jaybirds, great-horned owls, white pelicans (brown pelicans are protected) ravens, ricebirds, roadrunners, sapsuckers, English sparrows, starlings and woodpeckers.

Grackles and golden eagles (Mexican brown eagles), although not protected by state law, are protected by federal law."

"Fur-bearing Animals - Animals classed as fur-bearers may be taken at any time for any other purpose than taking pelts. (*italics ours*) Animals classified as fur bearers include beaver, otter, mink, ring-tailed cat, badger, polecat or skunk, raccoon, muskrat, opossum and fox."

Protests were made to the Parks and Wildlife department on the grounds that several of the species of birds listed in the "Unprotected Birds" paragraph were, in fact, protected by federal law. These species are, according to a list compiled as of August, 1963, by the United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife:

Brewer's Blackbird
 Rusty Blackbird
 Red-winged Blackbird
 Yellow-headed Blackbird
 Loggerhead Shrike
 Northern Shrike
 Roadrunner
 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
 Williamson's Sapsucker

All species of woodpeckers which occur in the state of Texas.

In the 1964-1965 issue, these paragraphs were amended as follows:

"Year-Round Hunting - Rabbits and other unprotected species may be hunted year-round."

"Unprotected Animals" - deleted "and many imported species".

"Unprotected Birds" - word for word, the same.

"Fur-bearing Animals" - for "other than taking pelts" substitute "other than to obtain pelts for sale", and add "wild civet" to the list of animals.

It seems to us that the State of Texas, in a pamphlet published by and bearing the seal of the state, is still encouraging hunters to violate federal

law by advertising that several species of birds are unprotected when, in fact, these birds are protected by the Federal Government. This fact was pointed out to the Parks and Wildlife Department prior to the printing of the present pamphlet.

We think that this is a fitting subject for letters to be addressed to at least the following persons:

Gov. Connally
 Att. Gen. Waggoner Carr
 Executive Director, Parks and Wildlife Department J. Weldon Watson
 State Senators and Representatives.

There are many facets to the rightness or wrongness of hunting animals. There are many different kinds of hunting. Given a healthy population of game animals and birds, true sport hunting can be a boon to both the hunter and the species hunted. With the abundance of deer we now have in Texas, the health of the species depends in part on the number of deer that are harvested each year so that the remainder will have ample forage to remain healthy. There are more than enough deer to insure the survival of the species and to fulfill the desires of the hunters. In some instances, the number of individuals within a species become so depleted that it becomes necessary to restrict or halt the hunting of that species until the population rebuilds. These are restrictions which the sports hunter places upon himself. In general, sports hunting is that hunting in which the combination of restrictions upon the hunter and the character of the prey are designed to make a relatively even match between the hunter and hunted.

There is another kind of hunting. There are some species of animals and birds, which after careful study, are judged to be more detrimental than beneficial to the economic interests of man. These species are often hunted without any consideration to sportsmanship, and, within this context, rightly so. This is not to say that there may be some esthetic reasons for preserving these species if they are in danger of being extirpated. There is a rationale which advocates the unsportsmanlike hunting of some species and this rationale is in some instances respectable.

There is a third kind of hunting and this kind of hunting is the practice of simply potting anything that moves and this kind of hunting is stupid. It does not help the species or the recreational or economic welfare of man. So the state of Texas, in an official publication, invites anyone who happens to read this pamphlet, to take pot shots at Turkey Vultures, Black Vultures, Peregrine Falcons (duck hawks), jaybirds, White Pelicans. These birds are either beneficial or innocuous to the interests of man. We are not mammalogists or we feel sure that we could cite unprotected or fur-bearing animals that would fall in the same category.

We feel that the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department are perpetrating an injustice against all members of the animal kingdom (including Homo Sapiens) by the distribution of this pamphlet as it is now printed and that they and other members of our state government should hear about it. Eds.

CLEARING HOUSE July

Pied-billed Grebe: (32, 1 with 3 chicks)3 Cove AKM.
 White Pelican: (3)2 (40)12 (20)19 Cove AKM.
 Anhinga: (1)10,16 Cove AKM
 Reddish Egret: (4)21 Galveston HH LH.
 Wood Ibis: (125)2,19 (25)10 (70)11 (60)19 (200)12 Cove AKM.
 White-faced Ibis: (3)11 (8)12 (1)19 (15)30 Cove AKM.
 White Ibis: (11)10 (30)11 (1)12 (5)19 Cove AKM.
 Roseate Spoonbill: (1-4)8,13,17 (10)9,10 (40-60)2,11,19 Cove AKM; (4)26 Galveston Hiway CJ CFJ.
 Mallard: (2)12 Cove AKM.
 Mottled Duck: 11 days (40)2 (50)11 Cove AKM.
 Gadwall: (2-3)12 first ever in flight in July Cove AKM.
 Pintail: (1)12 (2)19 all crippled Cove AKM.
 Blue-winged Teal: (1 with 6 small)12 Cove AKM.
 American Widgeon: (8)12 (6)19 Cove AKM.
 Canvasback: (1)3 first for July CoveAKM.
 Lesser Scaup: (5)3 (7)12 Cove AKM.
 Black Vulture: (1)11,13 (17)23 Cove AKM
 Red-shouldered Hawk: (1)13 Cove AKM.

6

Bald Eagle: (1 immature)18 intersection San Felipe Rd. and Loop 137
(1 immature)28 Newcastle at SW Freeway CJ CFJ.
King Rail: (1)12,19 Cove AKM.
Clapper Rail: (7, 2 immature)2 (2, 1 immature)13 (1)19 Cove AKM.
Common Gallinule: (1)3 (3)16 Cove AKM.
American Coot: (10)3 (1)12 (6)16 Cove AKM.
Semipalmated Plover: (2)19 Cove AKM.
Piping Plover: (1)12 earliest ever by 17 days Cove AKM; (2)21 Galv. HH LH.
Snowy Plover: (1)21 Galveston HH LH.
Wilson's Plover: (1)13 Cove AKM; (10)21 Galveston HH LH.
Black-bellied Plover: (5)2,13 Cove AKM; (4)21 Galveston HHLH.
Ruddy Turnstone: (6)21 Galveston HH LH; (9)26 Galveston CJ CFJ.
Spotted Sandpiper: (1)11 (2)12,19 Cove AKM; (2)21 Galveston HH LH.
Willet: (26)2 (7)12 (21)13 (8)19 Cove AKM.
Greater Yellowlegs: (6)12 (1)19 Cove AKM.
Lesser Yellowlegs: (4)11 (75)12 (2)16 (8)19 (20)30 Cove AKM.
Knot: (6)21 Galveston HH LH.
Least Sandpiper: (1)11 (125)12 (4)13,etc. Cove AKM.
Stilt Sandpiper: (1)26 Galveston CJ; (9)19 Cove AKM.
Semipalmated Sandpiper: (3)2 2nd earliest. once on June 28 Cove AKM.
American Avocet: (8)12 (20)19 Cove AKM.
Black-necked Stilt: (4)21 Galveston HH LH.
Herring Gull: (1)2 Cove AKM.
Sandwich Tern: (20)13 Cove AKM; (2)21 Galveston HH LH.
Black Tern: (25)21 Galveston HH LH.
Yellow-billed Cuckoo: (1)10 yard HH LH.
Screech Owl: (1)7,22 Cove AKM.
Ruby-throated Hummingbird: (1)2,4,11,17,20,26 (2)3 Cove AKM; (2)11,etc. yard HH LH
Downy Woodpecker: (2)23 (1)24 Cove AKM.
Eastern Kingbird: (1-5)15 days Cove AKM.
Empidonax Flycatcher: (1)13 Cove AKM.
Eastern Wood Pewee: (1)29 Earliest ever by 5 days Cove AKM.
Horned Lark: (2)21 Galveston HH LH.
Bank Swallow: (3)21 Galveston HH LH.
Rough-winged Swallow: (4)14 (3)17 Cove AKM.
Barn Swallow: (2)26 Cove AKM; (8)21 Galveston HH LH.
Tufted Titmouse: 13th only Cove AKM.
Starling: (1 flock of 35)2 Cove AKM.
Black-and-white Warbler: (6)13 Cove AKM.
Pine Warbler: (5)3 Cove AKM.
Orchard Oriole: (2)10 yard HH LH; (2)16 yard CJ.
Baltimore Oriole: (1)13 yard CJ CFJ.
Summer Tanager: (1)10 yard HH LH.
Dickcissel: (1)21 Galveston HH LH.
Seaside Sparrow: (8)2 (1)12 (12)13 Cove AKM.

AKM Arlie K. McKay
HH LH Henry and Louise Hoffman

CJ CFJ Charlotte and Cy F. Johnson

Notes from Clearing House reports

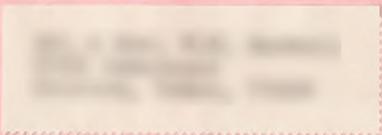
A pair of Cardinals built at least three, and possibly five, nests at our house. The first two were found after the fourth was abandoned. Three fledgings in the third nest were still being fed while the fourth nest was being built. Three eggs were laid in the fourth nest, the first egg on June 17. One failed to hatch but two birds matured. The male helped build the fifth nest. The two fledgings in the fourth nest appeared hungry and neglected. The first egg was laid in the fifth nest on July 18. All hatched and are doing well. The first nest was located in a crepe myrtle 5' 8" from the north bedroom window, the second in a boxwood shrub 2'2" from the bathroom window, the third in a honeysuckle 11'7" from the front porch, the fourth in a huckleberry tree 3'1" from the living room window and the fifth in a black haw 9'1" from the south bedroom window. I am hoping they will build another nest.

AKM

Officers of the Ornithology Group:

Chairman: Harvey Patten
Secretary: Miss Katrina Thompson
Treasurer: Miss Ella Wolfer
Field Trip Chairman: Bob Braden
Program Chairman: Mrs. L.W. (Margaret) Anderson
Co-editors of the SPOONBILL: Jim and Pat Ellis, 5414 Fairdale, Houston, Tex. 77027

Outdoor Nature Club
(Ornithology Group)
3707 Reveille Rd.
Houston 17, Texas
Return Postage Guaranteed



69
Angie

