



# THE SPOONBILL

Volume 6 No. 12

April 1958

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 \* STACK-UP \*  
 \* \*  
 \* Tennessee biologists Roy Anderson, \*  
 \* Sumner Dew, and Jay Hammond saw two \*  
 \* Mallards collide in mid-air as two \*  
 \* separate flights of ducks swooped down \*  
 \* to some decoys. Both fell - one dead, \*  
 \* the other stunned. The dead bird \*  
 \* showed no shot marks, only a bruised \*  
 \* chest. \*  
 \* \*\*\*\*\*

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## FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

April 20 - Sunday - Upper Gulf Coast Spring Roundup! Every member of the Ornithology Group should spend as much time in the field as possible on April 20. Make up your own party, select your own area (within a 200-mi. radius), and send list of all species positively identified to Mrs. Norma C. Oates, 5908 Charlotte, Houston 5, Texas. Those who cannot go afield should record species in their neighborhood, city parks, etc.\*

April 25 - 27 - Friday, Saturday, and Sunday - Texas Ornithological Society annual meeting to be held at Corpus Christi. Headquarters will be the Robert Driscoll Hotel, 615 N. Broadway. Mr. A. Earl Jaurde is chairman of the trip.

June 5 - Bi-monthly meeting of the Ornithology Group. This is to be an outdoor meeting and the exact location will be announced in the May "Spoonbill".

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## ORNITHOLOGY GROUP REPORTS

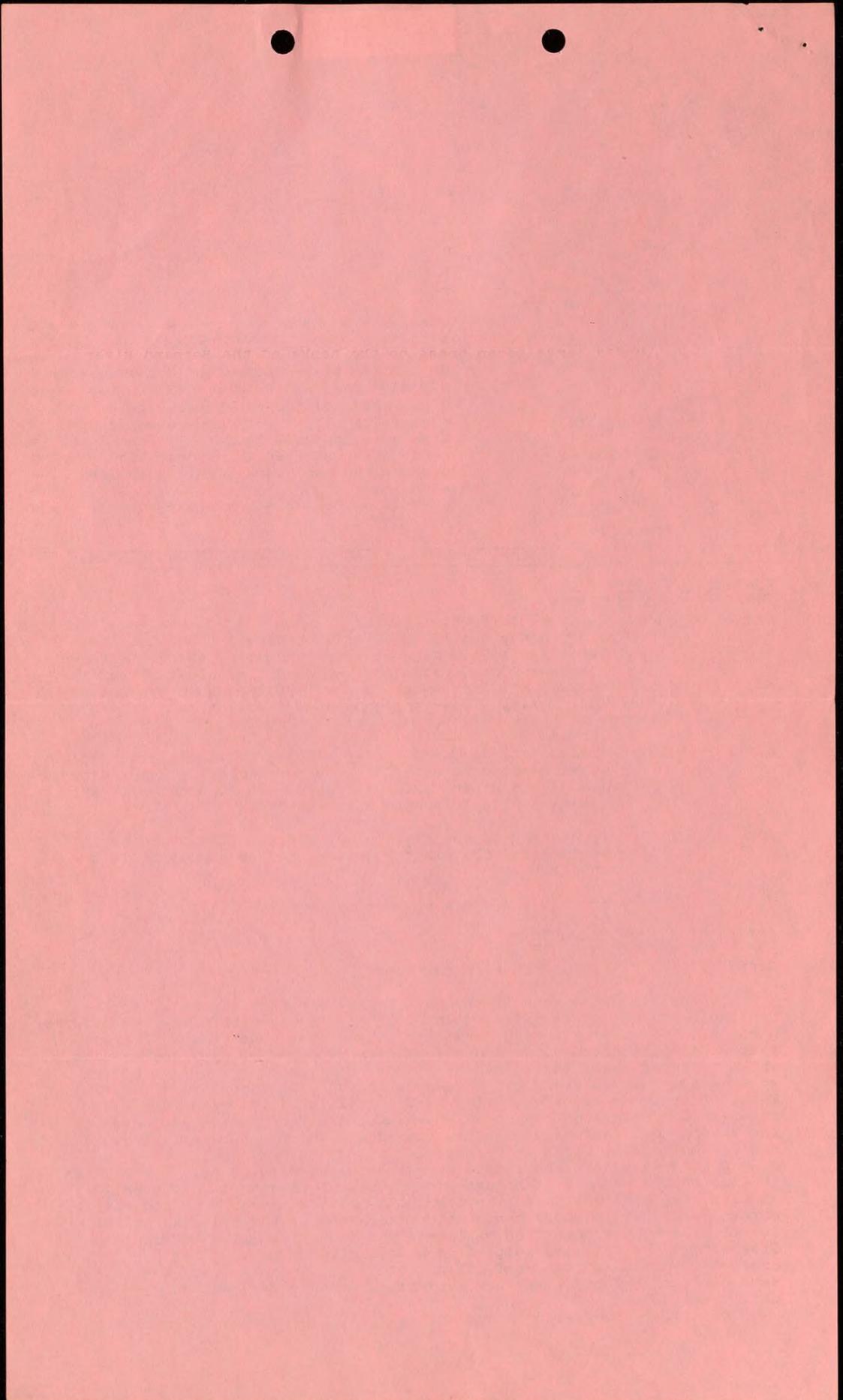
March 16 - O. G. Field Trip - (Norma Oates)

The hustle and bustle of progress follow the main highways, so the Ornithology Group chose quiet, country lanes where we could stop to observe birds without causing a major traffic jam. On the "back roads" traveling from Houston to Sargent, we found a pleasant and interesting countryside; which included small lakes, marshy fields, tiny brooks, two rivers, and wooded areas with stately old live-oaks draped with streamers of Spanish Moss. There were no cafes, drive-ins, or filling stations on the back roads we followed, but now and then we passed a farm house nestled among the trees and occasionally one that was deserted and in ruins. We also saw and heard many birds as we traveled among the back roads.

Our caravan left the Alameda Highway at a sign which read "Five Miles to Anchor" but we passed through Anchor without knowing it. The railway station that once displayed the town name had been moved away and only an empty spot remained where the station had stood by the railroad tracks. A few miles down the road from what once was Anchor, a Pileated Woodpecker flew across the road and settled on a tall utility pole. Then another crossed above us and returned, then another and another -- or was it the same one just trying to see how many bird watchers were out on such a chilly March day!

At nearly every stop in wooded areas, Parulas buzzed their little

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song from all directions. These sprightly little songsters are very good at hiding behind a leaf or a clump of moss -- and only the lucky ones caught glimpses of these diminutive warblers. The White-eyed Vireo, another hard-to-see-bird, reminded us, with his cheery song, that the warm days of spring were not too far away. Myrtle and Black-and-White Warblers were also in the tall trees as well as Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Solitary Vireos, and many others.

Our road passed through a marshy area where a few water birds were found, including one Ring-necked Duck and a mystery bird perched on a tall stump which proved to be a Great Blue Heron.

By noon we had reached Hinkle's Ferry and decided to spread our picnic lunch under large pecan trees on the banks of the Bernard River. This ferry is about to take its place with other relics of the past, for as soon as a new bridge up the river is completed, Hinkle's Ferry will be discontinued.

Across the river and on toward Sargent, the road passed over several interesting little streams. At one we watched a Spotted Sandpiper teetering on the shore and enjoyed the antics of a pair of Carolina Wrens who kept popping in and out of their home - a hole in an old bridge piling. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet made its appearance here as well as a Red-shouldered Hawk and many Myrtle Warblers that were beginning to acquire spring finery.

Several miles down the road we crossed a little creek of clear running water, lined with willows, and here we spied one of our most beautiful flycatchers - a male Vermilion. This one, perched on a dead willow limb, made numerous dashes after tasty morsels, always returning to the same perch and giving everyone an opportunity to admire his vivid colors and acrobatic talents.

By the time we reached the beach at Sargent, the thick gray clouds had closed in, and a sharp wind whipped the waves on the shore until spray from the icy water splashed us as we searched the beach for shells and driftwood. Because of the water, few birds were on the beach, but as we were leaving, a flight of White Ibis flew single file up the shore line.

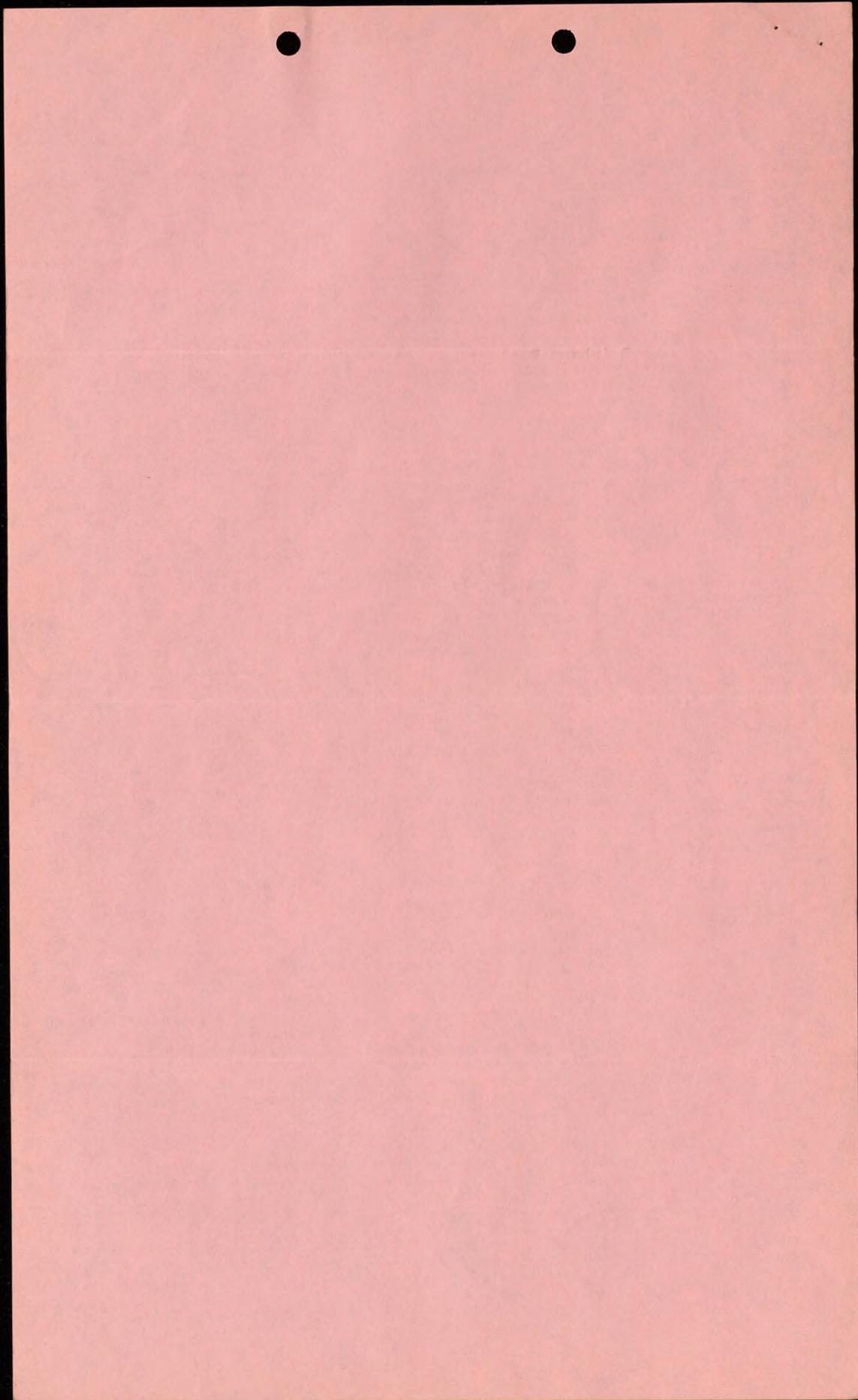
Other interesting birds noted during the day were three Caracaras feeding with vultures in a pasture, eight or ten Rough-winged Swallows perched on a light wire, and large flocks of Snow and Blue Geese in the air on the coastal prairie near Sargent.

The leader of this pleasant trip was Jimmie Murray, others who attended were: Eva and C. B. Gilman, Louise and Henry Hoffman, Leota Stilwell, Josephine Wilkin, Charlotte Reindl, Helen Wolfer, Larry Semander, Carl Aiken, Ronald Fowler, Mrs. J. A. Snyder and Clinton Snyder from Baytown, Robert Simpson, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Daniel, Austin Evans from Freeport, and Norma Oates.

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#### CLEARING HOUSE

- March 2 - Clinton Snyder found a Palm Warbler east of Cedar Bayou.
- March 8 - 3 Parula Warblers, 2 Black-and-White Warblers, and 1 Canada Goose noted on the Brazos River close to Sugarland. (John O'Neill)
- About 35 Golden Plover were seen at Westheimer Road and Addicks-Howell Road. (Ella Wolfer and Norma Oates)
- March 9 - Armand Yramategui and Carl Aiken found an American Bittern at Palmer Lake in East Texas.
- Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Fish Crow noted at the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary by Joe Heiser and Armand Yramategui.
- Ronald Fowler found a Screech Owl on a nesting box and two Red-breasted Nuthatches at 431 Knipp Road.
- Clinton Snyder noted 5 Common Terns on Galveston Island. Their calls were the main identifying characteristic.
- Short-eared Owl seen on Katy-Hockley Road south of Longenbaugh ranch. (Hardin Craig, Jr.)
- March 10 - John O'Neill observed a Purple Finch in his yard at 10723 Beinhorn Road.
- March 11 - William T. Smith brought a YELLOW RAIL to the Museum of Natural History in Hermann Park. The rail was found dead on a road near Pearland, and because of its condition only the wings and head were kept.
- Black Terns noted at Baytown Tunnel by Clinton Snyder.



- March 15 - John O'Neill, Ralph Peterson, and Granger Hunt recorded three Burrowing Owls on Galveston Island. All birds were found near their burrows.  
Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Strickling noted Fulvous Tree Ducks between Anahuac and Winnie, Texas.
- March 18 - John O'Neill noted 2 Yellow-billed Cuckoos in his yard at 10723 Beinhorn Road. He also reports that Black-and-White and Parula Warblers are fairly common in his neighborhood.
- March 20 - John O'Neill observed 12 Cedar Waxwings, 3 Purple Finch, and 3 Parula Warblers at his home.
- March 21 - 2 Yellow-throated Warblers noted by John O'Neill at 10723 Beinhorn Road.
- March 22 - Scissor-tailed Flycatcher found at College Station, Texas, by Josiephine Wilkin.  
9 Golden Plover seen on Post Oak Road by John O'Neill.  
Larry Semander, Armand Yramategui, and Carl Aiken found a Bachman's Sparrow at the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary.
- March 23 - Armand Yramategui noted a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher near Texas City.  
The following were found in Galveston by Ruth Moorman, Leota Stilwell, and Norma Oates: 6 Scissor-tailed Flycatchers; 4 CATTLE EGRETS were in a pasture near 9-Mile Road, one with the top of his head very brownish; 2 Whimbrels; hundreds of Golden Plover; 1 Upland Plover; 6 Common Snipe; 1 Wilson's Warbler in Kempner Park; 3 Solitary Sandpipers; and 10 Belted Kingfishers.
- March 24 - 40+ Blue-gray Gnatcatchers seen at the home of John O'Neill, 10723 Beinhorn Road.
- March 25 - Ronald Fowler noted 3 Chimney Swifts at the Spring Branch High School.
- March 29 - John O'Neill recorded 3 Barn Owls, 1 Barred Owl, 1 Blue-winged Warbler, 30+ Parula Warblers, 5 Black-and-White Warblers, and 2 Black-throated Green Warblers.  
Eastern Kingbird found dead on a road near Pearland, Texas.
- March 30 - The following were noted by John O'Neill: 13 Broad-winged Hawks, 1 Cerulean Warbler, 1 Black-throated Green Warbler, 3 Golden Plover, and 1 Chimney Swift.  
Hardin Craig, Jr. found two Franklin's Gulls at Longenbaugh ranch. (W Harris County) Mr. Craig also noted a Whip-poor-will and a migration of about 25 Broad-winged Hawks at 314 Lindenwood, Houston.
- April 2 - 75+ Chimney Swifts and 1 Chuck-will's-widow seen by John O'Neill in the Memorial Drive area.
- April 6 - The following were seen at Kemah and Galveston by Larry Semander and Carl Aiken: Hooded Warbler (3), Chimney Swift (numerous), Marsh Hawk (1), Myrtle Warbler (5), Blue-winged Teal (58), Black-necked Stilt (11), American Bittern (2), Song Sparrow, Roseate Spoonbill, Black Duck, Shoveler, Baldpate (8), Gadwall (2), Mottled Duck (2), Black-crowned Night Heron, White Ibis (10), White-faced Ibis (12), Golden Plover (2), Common Gallinule (6), Pectoral Sandpiper (3), Rough-winged Swallow, Upland Plover (3), Lark Sparrow, Worm-eating Warbler, Sora Rail, Black-and-White Warbler (3), Brown Thrasher, and Parula Warbler.
- April 7 - Swainson's Hawk noted near Angleton. (Carl Aiken)  
Vic Emanuel recorded 2 Blue-winged Warblers, 6 Cedar Waxwings, and 8 White-crowned Sparrows on West Blvd., Houston.

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Colony of Inca Doves in Spring Branch - (Norma Oates)

On February 15, 1958, at the invitation of Mr. Conrad Deats, Leota Stilwell and I visited Mr. and Mrs. R. C. Standish who have a lovely home on a large, shady tract of land on Fries Road. The grounds contain beautiful shrubs, a large variety of trees, and many flowering plants. Mrs. Standish specializes in African Violets and Begonias. She has a greenhouse where the various species of violets and other plants thrive under her care.

While we sat on the patio, six or eight Inca Doves flew into the trees above us and in a few minutes they were feeding on the grain our host had



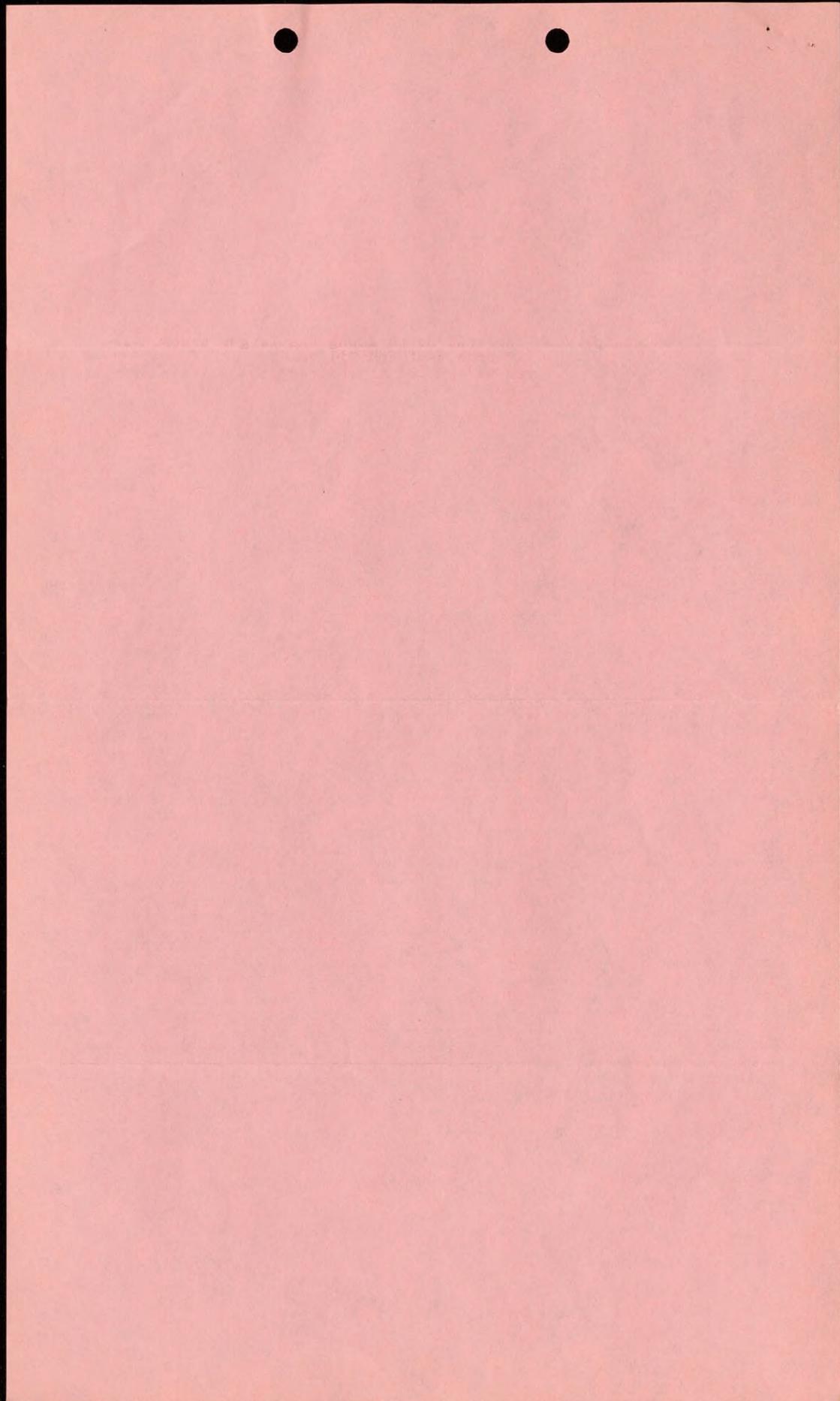
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scattered on the grass a few feet away. Mr. Standish said he first noticed the doves at his feeding trays over a year ago, and last spring they nested on his property although he is not sure any of the young survived. The doves have established a regular habit of gathering around the patio every afternoon to enjoy the food placed there by Mr. Standish.

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Notes on Birds Seen Near George West, Texas, March 29 & 30 - (Carl Aiken)

- Common Bluebird - Several seen near Victoria and Beeville.  
 Bobwhite - Noted several times near George West. About twenty miles west of George West the Bobwhite are mostly replaced by Scaled Quail.  
 Caracara - Only one or two recorded for the two day period.  
 Ground Dove - Several were recorded west of George West on the morning of March 30. Nearly all individuals of this species were in pairs and had probably already started nesting.  
 Inca Dove - One noted in George West.  
 Mourning Dove - Several large flocks were found feeding in fields. There was no evidence that they had started nesting or had even chosen a mate.  
 Gadwall - Two birds recorded on March 30.  
 Lesser Scaup - One or two individuals were found on March 30, near Tilden.  
 Yellow-shafted Flicker - Two birds recorded on the trip, one not far from Houston.  
 Scissor-tailed Flycatcher - A total of 27 individuals was seen on the trip.  
 Vermilion Flycatcher - Two birds (male and female) were noted near the home of Mr. Corone, west of George West.  
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - Seen commonly in all localities.  
 American Goldfinch - Several were recorded over the two days we spent at George West.  
 Cooper's Hawk - Three different birds were seen; two of them seemed to be migrating with Swainson's Hawks. The other was found while attempting to catch a small bird.  
 Harris' Hawk - Very common in the brush country and displayed their usual tameness and curiosity.  
 Red-tailed Hawk - Two birds seen on the trip.  
 Sparrow Hawk - A total of five individuals was seen on the trip.  
 Swainson's Hawk - Very common in the vicinity of George West. A few birds were always circling in the sky and large migration flocks could often be seen.  
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird - Several birds recorded on the trip.  
 Western Meadowlark - A few near George West.  
 Great Horned Owl - Two nests of this species were found in the brush country near George West. The young birds were nearly ready to leave the nest in both instances and were photographed by several parties. The owls were probably using abandoned Harris' Hawk nests.  
 Say's Phoebe - One individual recorded on March 30, west of George West.  
 Pyrrhuloxia - Fairly common in the brush country.  
 Roadrunner - Several were noted over the two day period.  
 Clay-colored Sparrow - Approximately a dozen individuals of this species were found near George West.  
 Lark Sparrow - Common along roadsides and open fields in the George West and Tilden areas.  
 White-crowned Sparrow - A small flock was recorded near the Corone ranch.  
 White-throated Sparrow - Several were found along the Frio River, near Tilden.  
 Sage Thrasher - Three or four were recorded between George West and Tilden, on March 30.  
 Hermit Thrush - One was seen on the Frio River.  
 White-eyed Vireo - Three or four were found in the thick brush near George West.  
 Audubon's Warbler - One was found on March 30, at George West.  
 Black-and-White Warbler - Two were recorded on the trip: one near George West, the other near Tilden.  
 Black-throated Green Warbler - Three individuals were found along the Frio River, near Tilden.  
 Myrtle Warbler - Seen commonly over the two day period.  
 Nashville Warbler - Two were recorded near Tilden.



Golden-fronted Woodpecker - Common in the vicinity of George West.  
 Bewick's Wren - Fairly common near George West.  
 House Wren - One was found on the Frio River.  
 Black-throated Sparrow - Common in the brush country.  
 Scaled Quail - Very numerous west of George West.  
 Curve-billed Thrasher - Several were found near George West and Tilden.  
 Cactus Wren - Several were found in the vicinity of the Corone ranch.  
 Lesser Goldfinch - One was noted at George West, on March 30.  
 Lark Bunting - Two fairly large flocks were seen on March 30. Most of the birds were either females or still in winter plumage.  
 Ladder-backed Woodpecker - Several noted among the larger trees near George West and Tilden.  
 Verdin - Three or four birds were noted in scattered localities over the two day trip.  
 White-necked Raven - Several were seen on March 30.  
 Wied's Crested Flycatcher - One positively identified between George West and Tilden, on March 30.  
 Bufflehead - One was noted near Tilden.  
 Turkey - One individual recorded over the two day period.

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U.S. ROUNDUPS BY YEAR - SINCE 1953

Total Species (Excluding Rock Dove)	Locality	Max. Extent (Air Miles)	Total Observers and Parties	Date
1953				
244	Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas	75	38 - 10	Apr. 19
230	Del. - Md. - N.J. - Pa.	136	72 - 16	May 10
221	Upper Gulf Coast, Texas	85	42 - 8	Apr. 26
212	D.C. - Md. - Va.	205	99 - 21	May 9
204	Rockport, Texas	50	8 - 2	Apr. 25
188	Maryland (State wide)	155	? - ?	May 9
166	Wilmington, N. C.	15	14 - 8	Apr. 25
126	Greensboro, N. C.	15	39 - 14	May 2
1954				
230	Upper Gulf Coast, Texas	110	58 - 21	Apr. 26
228	Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas	102	31 - 11	Apr. 25
226	Del. - Md. - N.J. - Pa.	136	61 - 14	May 16
214	D. C. (May Regional Census)	205	64 - 21	May 8
205	Maryland (State wide)	155	120 - 32	May 8
172	St. Marks, Florida	30	9 - 4	Apr. 19
164	Wilmington, N. C.	15	14 - 7	Apr. 17
120	Greensboro, N. C.	15	25 - 10	May 1
1955				
240	Del. - Md. - N.J. - Pa.	200	85 - 21	May 15
228	Sacramento, California	183	50 - ?	Apr. 30
219	Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas	102	40 - ?	Apr. 17
214	Upper Gulf Coast, Texas	120	46 - 13	May 1
209	D. C. Regional	205	45 - 17	May 7
195	Maryland (State wide)	155	80 - 21	May 7
155	Wilmington, N. C.	15	23 - 9	Apr. 23
153	St. Marks, Florida	38	11 - 5	Apr. 23
122	Greensboro, N. C.	15	29 - 12	Apr. 30



1911

1912

1913

1914



1956

241	Del. - Md. - N.J. - Pa.	200	74 - 19	May 13
234	S. E. Texas	208	48 - 14	May 6
233	D. C. Regional	205	81 - 20	May 12
230	Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas	102	44 - 14	Apr. 15
230	Maryland (State wide)	198	110 - 23	May 5
228	Sacramento, California	100	21 - 9	Apr. 29
168	St. Marks, Florida	45	12 - 5	Apr. 14
165	Mobile, Alabama	37	8 - 3	Apr. 21
162	Wilmington, N. C.	15	28 - 8	Apr. 21
125	Greensboro, N. C.	15	34 - 16	Apr. 28

1957

262	South Texas	185	43 - 14	Apr. 28
261	S. E. Texas	219	60 - 17	Apr. 28
222	Del. - Md. - N.J. - Pa.	200	55 - 14	May 12
217	Maryland (State wide)	198	131 - 19	May 4
212	D. C. Regional	205	237 - 20	May 11
194	Mobile, Alabama	60	14 - 8	Apr. 13
180	St. Marks, Florida	60	10 - 7	Apr. 20
142	Wilmington, N. C.	15	21 - 8	Apr. 27
128	Greensboro, N. C.	15	24 - 11	Apr. 27

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SCARLET Tanager - Burnished Black and Blazing Red  
 From Our Amazing Birds by Robert S. Lemmon

No North American bird is more brilliantly colored than the glowing scarlet and jet-black male of this tanager species, and few can bring the thrill you feel when you see one clearly for the first time. Whether he is high in a tree, flying across a country road ahead of you, or feeding briefly on your lawn, you cannot escape the impression that a literal fragment of the fabulous Tropics has just flashed into view.

Actually the tanager tribe is predominantly a tropical group, and a large one. Of the three hundred-odd species, all confined to the New World, only five are found in North America: the Western, Hepatic, and Cooper's on the West Coast, the Summer Tanager in the lower Central and Southern States, and the Scarlet, whose breeding range is from the southern Canadian Provinces to South Carolina and Arkansas, with Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru as a winter resort.

Scarlet Tanagers are real warm-weather birds and seldom put in their springtime appearance until the trees are well in leaf. As with so many birds, the males arrive first, sometimes in considerable numbers. Even this late in the season a cold northeast storm can so numb them and the insects which comprise their diet that many become so nearly helpless that they alight on the ground in all sorts of odd places, including open roads and suburban sidewalks. If the storm persists for two or three days, some of them succumb to cold and hunger, and in some areas many are killed by cars on the highways.

Normally, Scarlet Tanagers spend most of their time well up in the trees, where the thick foliage, coupled with their rather deliberate movements, makes them quite difficult to see. The males are great singers, though, and their jolly caroling, faintly rough when near by, can be heard for a long distance. They are one of the few birds that have the gift of ventriloquism, which makes the problem of locating the concealed singer still more difficult.

It is early summer before these fantastic birds set about raising their one annual brood of four or five, in a sizable thin nest of twigs, grass, and rootlets well out on a horizontal branch usually about twenty feet from the ground. The female, soberly dressed in unobtrusive yellowish green and dusky gray, takes over the whole task of incubation, for her brilliant mate would be far too noticeable for such secretive work. But he pitches into the feeding job with a will as soon as the young hatch, and altogether is a thoroughly devoted husband and father.

By early October the whole tanager family is on the way south, and at this time you can scarcely tell the old male from the female and young, for his gorgeous springtime red has been exchanged for an imitation of



These points are important  
and should be noted.

It is important to note that the data is not complete.

their inconspicuous traveling dress. Not until late winter will he regain his brightness in preparation for another season of showing us Northerners what the Tropics can do when they try.

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THE TOUCAN

The toucan, that rarest of topics  
For poets, inhabits the tropics;  
Its beak is as long as its body,  
A rare sight in Passamaquoddy.  
These colorful impedimenta  
May range from chartreuse to magenta;  
It dines on papayas and mangos,  
I'd guess when it dances it tangos,  
And when it lets go with a chantey  
You'd call it a feathered Durante,  
But since it can't talk like a parrot  
Some people profess they can't bear it;  
All right, so it isn't a speaker,  
The noises it makes are uniquer.  
Why not learn to treasure the toucan?  
I did, and I'm positive you can.

- Loyd Rosenfield

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Special Notice

The enjoyable task of getting out the "Spoonbill" has come to an end for your present editor. He would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members and non-members who so graciously helped him during the past year and encourage them to continue such support in the years ahead. As long as such enthusiasm and vigor are expressed, there will always be a "Spoonbill."

Starting this month, Mrs. Henry S. Hoffman will be your editor. All articles, reports, and observations should be sent to her at 443 Hollow Drive, Houston 24, Texas.

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OFFICERS OF THE ORNITHOLOGY GROUP

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