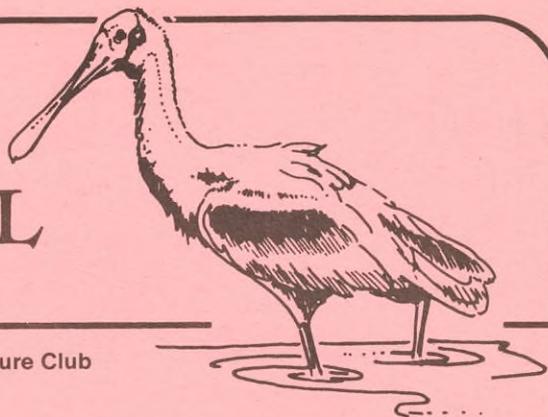


The SPOONBILL



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Houston, Texas Wanda Smith, editor

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Coming Events

Wednesday, Sept. 3: Deadline for Spoonbill articles, announcements and Clearing House reports.

Thursday, Sept. 4: Ornithology Group meeting at Bayou Manor, 4141 S. Braeswood at 7:30 PM. Our speaker, Jim Morgan, will share some of his expertise in identifying hawks.

Tuesday, Sept. 9: Outdoor Nature Club meeting, 7:30 PM, Garden Center, Hermann Park. The program will include Marion Taylor's presentation on "Trees" as well as Ron Grimes' slideshow, "Photography Group Field Trips".

Saturday, Sept. 20: Ornithology Group/Outdoor Nature Club field trip to Anahuac NWR and vicinity, led by David Dauphin, Don Richardson and Rob Thacker. Meet at White Memorial Park parking lot at 7:30 AM. To reach the park take I-10 east from Houston, exit on SH-61 (Hankamer), turn right (south) onto SH-61 and proceed past the convenience store. Then White Park will be on the right. Plans are to bird this park and then go to Anahuac Refuge. Lunch plans are to eat at the High Island rest stop, so come prepared to "brown bag" it.

COMPILER NEEDED

The Houston Christmas Count needs a compiler. Please contact Robert Thacker: home-467-6884; work-227-1497.

TOS MEETING IN GALVESTON

Plans are underway for the fall meeting of the Texas Ornithological Society in Galveston November 6-9. In addition to the expected banquet program and field trips, a series of identification workshops will be held. More information will be available in the next newsletter.

Martha Micks, Local Committee

NOTICE - UPDATE ON MV WHOOPING CRANE

Due to erroneous and outdated information from outside sources, the Spoonbill stated that the MV Whooping Crane is no longer running. Recently, Mr. Jarrell Jennings of the Sea Gun Resort personally informed me that the boat is operational and will be carrying passengers out to see the Whooping Cranes from approximately mid-October through mid-April. The boat will operate every day except Mondays with tours leaving promptly at 8:00 AM and returning at noon. Special charters for groups of 40 or more are available. Call (512) 729-6001 for reservations and information.

We regret any confusion that our earlier announcement may have caused.

Editor

Noel's Niche Looking Back

by Noel Pettingell

.....TEN YEARS AGO
FROM AUGUST, 1976 SPOONBILL:

"MINUTES OF OG MEETING, AUGUST 5, 1976

Bob Moulton, Program Chairman, was asked to take over the meeting and introduce the speaker, Russ Clapper, manager of the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. Bob said that Russ has spent 31 years on national wildlife refuges and has been on all the Gulf Coast Refuges.

Mr. Clapper explained that the purpose of wildlife refuges was for public enjoyment both for now and in the future, and the managers attempt to enforce the Endangered Species Act and the Conservation Act. Everyone is helping who signs in with the purpose of his visitation (for showing the value to the Secretary of the Interior), and by writing congressmen how you feel about wildlife refuges. You will also be helping if you bring someone else because you will be interpreting to that person and then he will interest others. All refuges are about six years behind in development plans, and Mr. Clapper regrets the cut-down in personnel who could assist in instruction. In the question and answer period members gleaned some of the following bits of information: It's difficult to find a red wolf for breeding purposes who isn't a coyote hybrid; the reasons for roads at the refuge being blocked off may be due to mud, or to the protection of the public when sometimes cannon-netting blinds (for banding) are being used; 9838 acres were originally bought for the refuge; the sign-in booth was temporarily gone because a new one was being erected; about 12,000 people visit the Anahuac Wildlife Refuge in a year; sometimes more bird species can be encouraged to come by varying the habitat (if funds to do so are available); Brazoria and San Bernard Refuges are staffed but still aren't as much fun to go to since roads within have never been built; camping at Anahuac is allowed on the beach, limit 3 days, but 'Mr. Mosquito is Public Enemy Number 1!' Mr. Clapper kept coming back to economy in government and thus restriction of refuge activities."

.....TWENTY YEARS AGO
FROM AUGUST, 1966 SPOONBILL:

Letter from Dr. and Mrs. E. R. Wright, 1515 W. Broad St., Freeport, August 6.

"We started quite regularly going out on rounds to check on birds in mid-January. We mainly were impressed with the huge flocks of White-faced Glossy Ibis, noting that they were supposed to be uncommon. They continued to be thick all through spring until some time after the first of June. Then they mostly disappeared until after the first week in July. Now they are thick again, July 24 and since then.

"March 15 we started out for the first time with a good scope! What fun! We found Ruddy Ducks, Eared Grebes.

We continued to see six pairs of Eared Grebes until after June 17 (we were gone on vacation). July 2 we were out again and found one male Eared Grebe. As of Sunday, July 3, 4, 9, he was still in the pond. He was still with us August 3rd!

"We have found huge flocks of Avocets since January. Finally they turned rusty but didn't leave. As late as June 17 we continued to see huge flocks and on July 2, 4, 9 and August 3, we found more in other ponds. 200 to 500 never did leave!

"We will be going out regularly and will send notice of anything unusual on all of our trips. Both of us identified the questionable ones, positively."

.....THIRTY YEARS AGO
FROM AUGUST, 1956 SPOONBILL:

"BARN SWALLOW

Centuries ago he spied his first barn, knew he'd come home at last, made the sign of victory with his tail, swept through the door on velvet wings, and went to plastering. Summer is in his form and flight -- summer the soft and lovely, summer the bright and swift. Aerialist insatiable, he even drinks on the wing. Without his tenancy, a barn is a tomb.

E. B. White, Nov. 1955 Ford Times"

BIRDING WITH BEHRSTOCK IN SOUTHERN MEXICO

BY Caroline Callery

Early on May 24th Jane and Gene Guinn, Margaret and Harold Haley, Laura and Al Singleton and I flew to Mexico City, where an hour's layover stretched to five. Bienvenidos a Mexico! The radar in the airport tower repaired (we trusted), on we flew to Villahermosa, where our tour leader, Bob Behrstock, patiently awaited us with the eighth participant in the weeklong Palenque Workshop, Gloria Saylor.

We drove in a deluge through the lowland savannah and marsh, dotted with palmetto, scattered trees and rangy cattle which grazed on short-cropped ranch fields. Nearing Palenque in the rain and darkness, Bob scored our first Mexican trip bird - a Paraque hit by the van! (It turned out to be the only one seen.) At our Hotel de las Ruinas we dined by candlelight after the faltering electricity quit for the night.

At five a.m. we awoke to sounds from a Tarzan movie - a loud troupe of howler monkeys in the jungle across the road. Walking up the curving mountain road to the temple ruins we birded the one hundred-fifty-foot jungle treetops and dense understory on both sides. Keel-billed Toucans, Collared Aracari, Olive-throated Parakeets, White-fronted Parrots and Black-headed Trogons flew across the road. Chestnut-colored Woodpeckers and Streak-headed Woodcreepers appeared on tree trunks and Piratic, Boat-billed, Social, Great Kiskadee, Yellow-olive and Common Tody Flycatchers flew in the upper branches. The profusely flowering exotic shrubs and trees drew Rufous-tailed Hummingbirds, White-bellied Emeralds, Green-breasted Mangos, Wedge-tailed Sabrewings and noisy Long-tailed Hermits into our view.

While checking out a large dead tree in a cleared field, a drama unfolded as we watched Masked and Black-crowned Tityras and Black-cheeked Woodpeckers moving around a number of holes in the trunk. Suddenly a gorgeous Emerald Toucanet swooped in and perched nearby, followed soon by a second. They slowly and deliberately proceeded to eat the contents of two nestholes (whether eggs or nestlings we couldn't tell) as the tityras and woodpeckers frantically tried to drive them away, to no avail. After ten minutes of viewing the reality of nature's food chain, we sentimentalists continued to climb, somewhat shaken.

Past Bananaquits, White-collared Seedeaters, Black-headed and Buff-throat-

ed Saltators and four species of tanagers we came to a stop before a gumbo limbo tree a hundred and fifty feet tall which had a spare-limbed canopy and sparse foliage. From the top hung the large, pendulous nests of twenty Chestnut-headed Oropendolas. Bob explained that they chose this species for nesting to prevent predation by the Giant Cowbird because it has few lateral branches for the cowbirds to perch upon. He added that the oropendolas also select trees with wasp nests to discourage cowbirds and other predators.

At the top of a long cleared path stood the ancient (300-1,000 A.D.) limestone ruins of the Mayan city of Palenque. The long palace with its handsome tower reminiscent of toy terracotta ones found in Chinese tombs of the same period, and the Temple of Inscriptions built around and above the tomb of their great king, Pacal, along with seven smaller temples all rose so nobly proportioned upon their pyramids in a clearing of several acres. The site looked out from the Chiapas foothills far over the coastal plain toward the Bay of Campeche. We searched the skies overhead for raptors rising on morning thermals and saw six species soar over. My favorites were the elegant Bat Falcon and two big White Hawks. The definition given by the latter's black tailbands and wing bars and the translucence of their wings against the sun, all complemented by the blue sky and dramatic setting, made a sight I won't forget.

That night Bob called in three Mottled Owls and a fiercely magnificent Black-and-White Owl, which vocalized and gazed at us for some time with large red eyes from a perch fifteen feet away in a cecropia tree.

Next morning we drove up into the Chiapas highlands passing many mountainside fields which were cleared by "slash and burn" and then planted with corn and beans by the Indians. Because the jungle humus as well as soil and water retention provided by tree roots have been eliminated, the Indians harvest only two or three crops before the thin soil is depleted and eroded. Then the land briefly supports grazing before the people must move on to clear more forest. This borderland between Mexico and Guatemala is severely stressed by the population explosion from nearly one hundred Guatemalan refugee camps and government resettlement of many thousands of Mexicans from other barren states, plus a heavy timbering policy. According to a recent National Geographic article, "The Ucumacinta River: Troubles on a Wild Frontier," the vegetation of this forest, estimated at over a thousand

plant species per square mile and representing four hundred years of growth will be gone in five years.

We were overwhelmed by the endangered jungle canopy and lush understory we hiked through that day: wild canna lily, begonia, bird of paradise, torch and spiral ginger, helicornia, banana, mango, philodendron, draecena, maranta, wandering jew, bromeliad and elephant ears three feet across. Seemingly every plant, palm and fern struggling in my house, plus thousands more, provided profuse cover for the numerous bird species.

The following days we drove through the low savannah and marshes of Tabasco and Campeche, sighting Bare-throated Tiger Heron, Pinneated Bittern, Amazon Kingfisher and Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Snail Kite, Aplomado Falcon, Short-tailed Hawk, Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture, Laughing Falcon, Rufous-breasted Spinetail (we were excited that Bob finally got a Mexican lifer!) Double-striped Thick-knee and Yucatan Jay. Bob's persistent search got us an exciting and gorgeous lifer - a Black-collared Hawk, which we studied through a scope set up behind the van on the shoulderless two-lane highway, with cars and trucks thundering by.

His patience, even disposition and wit are treasured by all who have been on tour with Bob. His field skills in spotting, bird sounds and distant sight identification, often in the dimmest jungle light, plus his ability to explain clearly the identifying field marks made this Palenque Workshop a rare trip for me, not to mention the 106 new life species I saw! Thanks to Bob I can't wait to go back.

A 4TH OF JULY VISIT TO THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

by Noel Pettingell

Thanks to our flight attendant daughter, Mary (who works for Continental airlines) my wife and I were able to obtain round-trip tickets to an area neither of us had ever visited before at a fraction of the regular fare. We stayed with our close friends, Ben and Linda Feltner, whom we had known for years in Houston, but who had moved to Seattle in the summer of 1984. Since the Feltners know where the best birding and sightseeing lies within easy driving distance of Seattle, we knew we were in good hands.

Day One - July 4 - Seattle. We were very impressed by this clean and picturesque city with its docks and markets facing Puget Sound and its varied flowers and evergreen trees dominating the suburban areas. The many hills through-

out the city and the mountains off in the distance (Olympics to the west and Cascades to the east), as well as the climate (mid-50's to mid-70's), were extreme contrasts to Houston's flatlands and sultry 75 to 95 temperature ranges. We ended the day watching spectacular fireworks over Puget Sound.

Day Two - July 5 - Olympic Peninsula

This most westerly corner of Washington and the lower 48 was reached via a ferry ride across Puget Sound during which we enjoyed a most welcome breakfast. During the ferry ride Ben and Linda pointed out four species of sea birds which I had never seen, Harlequin Duck, Marbled Murrelet, Rhinoceros Auklet and Tufted Puffin. These birds were spotted off Fort Worden State Park at the extreme NE tip of the Olympic Peninsula - the most northerly extent of our trip to Washington and a new personal "world latitude record" for me. Many of the scenes in the movie "An Officer and a Gentleman" were filmed at Fort Worden, incidentally.

Day Three - July 6 - Mt. Rainier National Park

This was truly the most spectacular scenery day of all as we took a breathtaking tour of the south slope of this immense 14,410-ft. mountain. We drove up to the lodge at an altitude of 5,420 feet and could see climbers nearing their base camp on the glacier-covered upper slopes at about the 10,000-ft. level. Clouds enveloped the crest most of the time, but cleared just in time for us to get several photos of the snow-covered peak against a deep blue sky. We walked up the nature trail and Ben located another new bird for me, Blue Grouse, my third "life bird" in the park (Chestnut-backed Chickadee and Vaux's Swift were the others). During our all-too-brief stay in this outstanding national park we saw magnificent stands of Douglas fir, a large mule deer feeding nearby, numerous shimmering streams and waterfalls and glimpses of the the magnificent Cascade Range which forms the eastern skyline.

During our return flight to Denver enroute to Houston we had an excellent bird's-eye view of Mt. Rainier that showed us how this mountain dominates the landscape - it's the highest peak in the entire state and can be seen from Seattle, over 50 miles away.

Besides the excellent birding and local culinary delights, both shared with good friends, the Pacific Northwest offers many points of interest, most of which are enhanced by the rugged beauty of the Cascade and Olympic Mountains. With these things in mind we look forward to future trips to Seattle so that we can enjoy more of what the area has to offer.

Clearing House - JULY, 1986

The Clearing House is a monthly record of bird sightings made on the Upper Texas Coast. How to read the CH: Location--(how many) date, observers. Common, widely distributed species on the UTC during the reported month are listed as follows: number of reports, (lowest # - highest #; total # of individuals seen), e.g. 8 reports (1-20;82). Noteworthy sightings will be underlined, capitalized, or both, according to their status. Birds with very rare, vagrant, accidental, or no status on the Checklist at the date of sighting require details. Sightings needing details but submitted without them will not be included in the regular Clearing House. All observations affecting the species' status on the current UTC Checklist must be accepted by the Checklist Committee. Documentation is a must for consideration by the Committee.

ABBREVIATION CODES

BBSP = Brazos Bend SP
GC = Galveston Co.
GISP = Galveston Is. SP
H = Houston
HA = Houston Arboretum
HIB = High Island Beach
MD = Mercury Drive
NWH = NW Houston
ORB = Old River Bridge

PI = Pelican Island
SJSJ = San Jacinto SP
SLP = San Luis Pass
SWH = SW Houston
WGI = W. Galveston Is.
WH = W. Houston
WHC = W. Harris Co.
WOB = White Oak Bayou

115 Species reported this month

Pelican, American White: SJSJ-(12)3, (8)10, DM
Cormorant, Olivaceous: SJSJ-(4)3, (20)10, DM;
PI-(6)6, RP; WGI-(5)11, MM
Frigatebird, Magnificent: West Bay-(4)6, MA;
WGI-(4)11, MM; (12)20, PC; (1)27, RP
Heron, Great Blue: 5 reports (2-40;86)
SJSJ-(15)3, (2)10, DM; PI-(40)6, RP;
WGI-(14)11, MM; (15)20, PC
Egret, Great: 5 reports (15-225;500)
SJSJ-(45)3, (15)10, DM; PI-(225)6, RP;
WGI-(15)11, MM; (200)20, PC
Egret, Snowy: SJSJ-(70)3, (40)10, DM; PI-(275)6, RP;
WGI-(80)20, PC
Heron, Little Blue: PI-(3)6, RP; SJSJ-(2)10, DM;
WGI-(3)20, PC
Heron, Tricolored: 5 reports (10-600;663)
SJSJ-(18)3, (10)10, DM; PI-(600 nesting)6, RP;
WGI-(10)11, MM; (25)20, PC
Egret, Reddish: 5 reports (1-15;29)
SJSJ-(1)3, DM; PI-(1)6, RP; SLP-(2)6, MA;
WGI-(10)11, MM; (15)20, PC
Egret, Cattle: 5 reports (10-50;125)
SJSJ-(30)3, (15)10, DM; PI-(20)6, RP; WHC-(50)13, PM;
WGI-(10)20, PC
Heron, Green-backed: 5 reports (1-5;10)
PI-(1)6, RP; SJSJ-(1)10, DM; GISP-(1)11, MM;
WHC-(5)13, PM; WGI-(2)20, PC
Night-Heron, Black-crowned: SJSJ-(1)3, (15)10, DM;
PI-(40)6, RP; GISP-(1)11, MM
Night-Heron, Yellow-crowned: PI-(2)6, RP; SWH-(1)29, PM
Ibis, White: 5 reports (3-200;320)
Dickinson-(7)4, MA; PI-(80 with 1 nest)6, RP;
WGI-(3)11, MM; (30)20, PC; Trinity R.-(200)12, SW
Ibis, White-faced: PI-(400 nesting)6, RP;
WHC-(35)13, PM; WGI-(30)20, PC
Spoonbill, Roseate: 5 reports (3-100;153)
SJSJ-(100)3, (12)10, DM; PI-(3)6, RP;
WGI-(26)11, MM; (12)20, PC
Stork, Wood: SJSJ-(12)3, (15)10, DM; ORB-(3)12, SW
Whistling-Duck, Fulvous: Winnie-(19)18, SW
Whistling-Duck, Black-bellied: BBSP-(8)28, MMA
Duck, Mottled: SJSJ-(4)10, DM
Vulture, Black: WHC-(1)13, PM
Vulture, Turkey: WHC-(2)4, SW
Osprey: SJSJ-(1)3-10, DM (Notes, ed.)
Kite, Black-shouldered: WGI-(4)6, MA; GISP-(1)11, MM;
Baytown-(1)12, SW
Kite, Mississippi: SWH-(1)2, PM;
Brazos R. @ Richmond-(7)26, SBW (Notes, ed.)
Hawk, Swainson's: 6 reports (1-2;8)
SWH-(1-2)1-18, SW; (1)10, 15, RB;
Lockwood @ Ship Channel-(2 nesting?)19, DM;
H-(1)30, WC; MD-(1)31, WC
Rail, Clapper: 5 reports (1-4;14)
PI-(4 2 nests)6, RP; SLP-(1)6, MA; SJSJ-(3)10, DM;
WGI-(3)11, MM; (3)20, PC
Plover, Black-bellied: SLP-(30)11, MM; WGI-(3)20, PC
Plover, Wilson's: SLP-(3)6, MA; (45)11, MM; WGI-(4)20, PC
Plover, Semipalmated: SLP-(2)6, MA; (2)11, MM
Plover, piping: SLP-(4)11, MM
Killdeer: PI-(3)6, RP; SJSJ-(10)10, DM; SLP-(2)11, MM;
WGI-(1)20, PC
Oystercatcher, American: SLP-(1)11, MM

Stilt, Black-necked: 5 reports (3-160;211)
SJSJ-(3)3, (4)10, DM; PI-(160)6, RP;
WGI-(14)11, MM; (30)20, PC
Avocet, American: ORB-(3)22, SW
Yellowlegs, Greater: SLP-(3)11, MM
Yellowlegs, Lesser: SJSJ-(12)10, DM; WGI-(6)20, PC
Williet: 5 reports (1-140;262)
SJSJ-(1)3, 10, DM; PI-(140)6, RP;
WGI-(80)11, MM; (40)20, PC
Sandpiper, Spotted: WGI-(1)20, PC; HIB-(3)22, SW
Curlew, Long-billed: SLP-(2)11, MM; WGI-(8)20, PC
Godwit, Marbled: SLP-(5)11, MM
Turnstone, Ruddy: SLP-(3)11, MM
Knot, Red: HIB-(1)22, SW (No notes, ed.)
Sandpiper, Least: WGI-(10)20, PC
Sandpiper, Western: SLP-(1)11, MM; WGI-(3)20, PC
Sandpiper, Least: WGI-(10)20, PC
DUNLIN: SLP-(1)6, MA; (1)11, MM (Notes, ed.)
peep, sp.: SJSJ-(18)10, DM; WGI-(20)20, PC
Dowitcher, Long-billed: HIB-(50)22, SW
dowitcher, sp.: WGI-(6)20, PC
JAEGER, POMARINE: SLP-(1)11, MM (Notes, ed.)
JAEGER, PARASITIC: SLP-(1)6, MA (Notes, ed.)
Gull, Laughing: 5 reports (30-20000;26070)
SJSJ-(30)3, (40)10, DM; PI-(20000)6, RP;
WGI-(1000)11, MM; (5000)20, PC
Gull, Ring-billed: SLP-(12)11, MM; WGI-(3)11, MM
Gull, Herring: SLP-(20)11, MM
Tern, Gull-billed: PI-(2)6, RP; WGI-(2)20, PC
Tern, Caspian: PI-(150)6, RP; SLP-(8)11, MM;
WGI-(50)20, PC
Tern, Royal: SJSJ-(1)3, DM; PI-(1000)6, RP;
SLP-(600)11, MM; WGI-(300)20, PC
Tern, Sandwich: PI-(5)6, RP; SLP-(40)11, MM
Tern, Common: SLP-(1)6, MA (Notes, ed.)
Tern, Forster's: SJSJ-(10)3, (4)10, DM; PI-(225)6, RP;
WGI-(12)11, MM
Tern, Least: 7 reports (3-125;305)
SJSJ-(15)3, (12)10, DM; PI-(3)6, RP; SLP-(125)11, MM;
HIB-(50)12, 22, SW; WGI-(50)20, PC
Tern, Black: 7 reports (1-80;173)
PI-(6)6, RP; SJSJ-(1)10, DM; SLP-(60)11, MM;
ORB-(2)12, (4)22, SW; WGI-(80)20, PC; HIB-(20)22, SW
Skimmer, Black: 5 reports (8-240;413)
SJSJ-(20)3, (8)10, DM; PI-(25)6, RP;
SLP-(240 nesting)11, MM; WGI-(120)20, PC
Dove, Rock: SWH-(20)1-31, PM; SJSJ-(150)3, DM;
GC-(1)6, RP; WGI-(50)20, PC
Turtle-Dove, Ringed: NWH-(6-8)1-31, VL
Dove, White-winged: WGI-(1)11, MM; (10)20, PC
Dove, Mourning: 7 reports (1-325;422)
NWH-(30)1-31, VL; SWH-(6)1-31, PM;
SJSJ-(50)3, (325)10, DM; PI-(1)6, RP; WGI-(6)20, PC;
HA-(4)25, DW
Dove, Inca: NWH-(10)1-31, VL; SWH-(2)1-31, PM
Barn-Owl, Common: WGI-(1)6, MA; GISP-(2)11, MM;
WHC-(1)22, RP
Screech-Owl, Eastern: Tomball-(1)21, SW
Owl, Barred: Tomball-(1)5, SW; WOB-(1)30, WC
OWL, SHORT-EARED: HI-(1)22, SW (Notes, ed.)
Nighthawk, Common: NWH-(2-4)1-31, VL; PI-(1)6, RP;
WGI-(5)11, MM; (5)20, PC
Swift, Chimney: NWH-(1)1-31, VL; SWH-(8)1-31, PM
Hummingbird, Ruby-throated: 9 reports (1-3;15)
Tomball-(2 pair summering)4-5, SW; WH-(1 male)
13-25, (2 males)26-27, (1 f/imm)19, 26-27, (2 f/imm)
20, (1-2 f/imm)28-31, JM; HA-(3)25, DW; H-(1)27, GC
Woodpecker, Red-headed: TC Jester Pk-(2-3)1-31, VL;
Friendswood-(1)3, MA
Woodpecker, Red-bellied: NWH-(2)1-31, VL;
Friendswood-(3)2-4, MA; HA-(1)25, DW; SWH-(1)25, PM
Woodpecker, Downy: NWH-(2)1-31, VL;
Friendswood-(2)2-4, MA; HA-(1)25, DW
Woodpecker, Pileated: Friendswood-(1)2-4, MA
Flycatcher, Acadian: HA-(2)25, DW
Kingbird, Western: 7 reports (1-3;11)
SWH-(1-3)1-18, SW; (1)9, 10, 16, 20, (3)23, RB;
Hockley-(1)21, SW (Status changing, ed.)
Kingbird, Eastern: SWH-(1)2, PM; GISP-(2)11, MM
Flycatcher, Scissor-tailed: SWH-(6)2, PM; PI-(2)6, RP;
WGI-(6)11, MM; (8)20, PC
Martin, Purple: 7 reports (4-3000;7108)
NWH-(4)1-28, VL; SWH-(4)1-31, PM; (2000)31, PM;
WGI-(60)11, MM; (40)20, PC; Kingsride behind
Memorial City Hosp.-(1500-2000)15-31, BH;
H-(3000)20, PC
Swallow, Tree: WHC-(2)4, SW
Swallow, Barn: Tomball-(3)1-31, SW; WGI-(15)11, MM
Jay, Blue: NWH-(6-8)1-31, VL; SWH-(2)1-31, PM;
HA-(1)25, DW
Crow, American: H-(1)20, PC
Chickadee, Carolina: NWH-(3)1-31, VL; HA-(2)25, DW
Titmouse, Tufted: NWH-(2)1-31, VL; HA-(5)25, DW
Wren, Carolina: NWH-(3)1-31, VL; SWH-(2)15-30, PM;
HA-(2)25, DW
Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray: WOB-(1)30, WC
Bluebird, Eastern: Friendswood-(1)3, MA
Robin, American: SWH-(1)29, PM
Mockingbird, Northern: NWH-(2-4)1-31, VL;
WGI-(30)20, PC; HA-(1)25, DW
Thrasher, Brown: WOB-(1)15, WC (Notes, ed.)
Shrike, Loggerhead: SWH-(1)2, PM; SJSJ-(2)10, DM;
WGI-(12)11, MM; (2)20, PC
Starling, European: NWH-(4-6)1-31, VL; WGI-(50)20, PC;
SWH-(20)20, PM

Vireo, White-eyed: Tomball-(3)5, SW; HA-(1)25, DW
 Vireo, Red-eyed: HA-(1)25, DW
 Parula, Northern: Tomball-(1)5, SW
 Warbler, Pine: Tomball-(2)4, SW
 Warbler, Black-and-white: HA-(1)25, DW
 Yellowthroat, Common: Tomball-(1)4, SW
 Tanager, Summer: HA-(1)25, DW
 Cardinal, Northern: NWH-(2-4)1-31, VL; SWH-(2)1-31, PM;
 HA-(3)25, DW
 Bunting, Painted: Tomball-(4)5, SW; GISP-(2)11, MM
 Dickcissel: Tomball-(25)5, SW
 Sparrow, Lark: Tomball-(1)4, SW
 Blackbird, Red-winged: PI-(50)6, RP; SJSP-(25)10, DM;
 WGI-(20)20, PC
 Meadowlark, Eastern: SWH-(1)2, PM; SJSP-(2)3, DM;
 WGI-(1)20, PC
 Grackle, Great-tailed: PI-(50)6, RP; WGI-(200)20, PC
 Grackle, Common: NWH-(6-10)1-31, VL
 Cowbird, Brown-headed: NWH-(4-6)1-31, (25)22, VL
 Oriole, Orchard: WOB-(2-5)1-31, WC; GISP-(2)11, MM;
 HA-(4)25, DW
 Sparrow, House: NWH-(10-25)1-31, VL; SWH-(20)1-31, PM

The following sightings, requiring details, were submitted without them:
 Sandpiper, Still: PI-(1)6, RP Early fall date, ed.
 Flycatcher, Least: Tomball-(1)21, SW No July records

CONTRIBUTORS - JULY, 1986

BH=Barbara Hortvet; DM=Derek Muschalek; DW=Doug Williams; GC=Glenn Cureton; JM=Jim Morgan; MA=Mike Austin; MH=DM Mark Magruder; HMA=Harvin Marek; PC=Randy & Bill Pinkston; Jerry Caraviotis; PM=Peggy Milstead; RB=Ron Braun; RP=Randy Pinkston; SBW=Steve & Beverly Williams; SW=Steve Williams; VL=Vanessa Luce; WC=Wesley Cureton

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES - JULY, 1986

Osprey: (male) Observed 2 consecutive weeks at San Jacinto State Park. These birds "winter" at this park, however I was quite surprised to find one here during the heat of July. Observed roosting in dead trees & also loafing on sandbars with Wood Storks. Field marks: dark brown above; white underparts with no streaking; white head with dark eye stripe. In flight the wings were very long & narrow & bent back at the wrist. The white wing linings contrasted with the dark wrist patches. Derek Muschalek

Mississippi Kite: On July 26, 1986, I observed 7 Mississippi Kites circling over the Brazos River at Richmond, where the U. S. 59 bridges cross. They are listed as extremely rare before the 1st of August, although I believe that migrants come through farther west in the UTC & Outer Circle areas in late July as well. There are also a few breeding records in the area now. Therefore, although I believe that their rarity at this time is likely overestimated, I'll go ahead & describe them as large gray birds with pointed wings, circling with virtually no flapping, & obviously hawk- or falcon-like in configuration. They were much like Black-shouldered Kites in appearance, but not in habits & behavior. All birds were adults. They were watched for about 5 minutes through a 25X scope as close as 75 yds away, & through 10X binocs. They were also observed by my wife, Beverly Williams. Eventually they circled farther south & out of sight. Steve Williams

(These kites are known to nest along the Brazos River near US 59 & other locations farther south - population has increased in this area since the last Checklist, ed.)

DUNLIN(alternate plumage): (No records for 1st week) Rufous crown, nape & back. White from chin to vent with large oval black patch on lower belly. Black legs & bill, the latter slightly decurved at the tip. Slightly larger than the Sanderlings with which it associated. Viewed from 20' with 7X35 binocs for 30 sec, full hazy sunlight. Mike Austin

DUNLIN: (No Records for 2nd Week) Resting on sand flats at San Luis Pass. This beautiful breeding plumaged bird was observed for 15 min at 30' by myself & Mark Magruder. Field marks: rusty-red back & scapulars; whitish, finely streaked underparts with conspicuous black belly patch; black legs; long, black, decurved bill. This is the 1st documented record for the 2nd week of July. Derek Muschalek
 (Current early fall date is July 15, 1967 & 1979, ed.)

POMARINE JAEGER: (No July records) Nearly same size as Ring-billed Gull but smaller than Herring Gull. This was a dark-phase juvenile, lacking the central tail feathers of adult jaegers. The bird was quite tame, allowing us to study it for a good hour. I identified the bird as a Pomarine, by the following field marks: extremely bulky body with prominent barring on breast. In flight the bird exhibited a rather steady, slow, wingbeat & the upperparts & upperwings were dark, with bold flashes of white at the base of primaries. The rump was also white & contrasted with the rest of the body. I eliminated both Parasitic & Long-tailed Jaeger, due to this bird's powerful, slow, flight pattern & its overall big bulky size. Derek Muschalek

PARASITIC JAEGER: (No July records) (2nd summer light phase) Head round. Forehead/crown darker brown than face. Curious dark crescent anterior to each eye. Face gray-brown with dark feather edgings. Iris uniform dark brown. Short bill; strongly decurved distal culmen. Basal 2/3 dull pink, outer 1/3 dark. Legs & feet dark with pale pink ring - mid tarsi. Nape/back gray-brown, concolor with cheek. Upper tail coverts (glimpsed while preening) white with black horizontal barring (therefore not 1st yr bird). Throat to vent finely barred brown, more distinct on belly & vent since background whitish - more confluent particularly on breast where background buff. Dark brown rectrices. Primaries extend to end of tail. Wing coverts dark brown, worn, some greater coverts with rufescent edges. Primaries dark with some diagonal rufescent barring of inner web. No vocalization heard. Ring-billed Gull size. Seen at 20-50' preening for ~10 min - then flew approx. 400 yds - rather heavy "jizz" with relatively wide wings, deep wingbeats. Huge numbers of loafing birds flushed wherever it flew but it made no attempts at parasitism. Observed for 12 min in excellent light - full hazy early a.m. (0730) sun at northwestern sand spit on east side of San Luis Pass channel with 40-64X Questar. Species hotly debated. I have experience with hundreds of (adult) jaegers, esp. Long-tailed. Rufescent, not gray, cast to plumage & jizz favor Parasitic, although I must admit size-wise this bird is certainly on the small end of the spectrum for this species. Mike Austin

Common Tern (1st summer): Full black cap. All dark bill, thinner than Gull-billed, shorter than Sandwich. Silver back & wings, the latter with a dark carpal bar visible on the bend of the folded wing. Pure white beneath. Loafing on a sandspit at the water's edge with several Royal Terns. Side-lit by hazy sun. 25-40X zoom Bushnell scope from 30 yds. Mike Austin

SHORT-EARED OWL: (No July Records) I saw the bird about dusk hovering over the marshes about 5 mi. east of High Island on Tx 87. Then it coursed back & forth over the area much like a N. Harrier would do. It was earless in appearance & streaked, with brownish ground-color below. It was picked up briefly in the headlights & then watched for 30 sec. or so with a 25X scope till it landed in the marsh grass & was lost from view. The behavior of the bird alone would have been diagnostic. Steve Williams

Brown Thrasher: Shaped like mocker but larger & longer. Bright russet upper parts, white breast with dark spots. Brown thrashers sang at White Oak Bayou all through May, but were not seen in June. Wesley Cureton

CH EDITOR'S NOTES - JULY, 1986

Ringed Turtle Doves: In the May CH Editor's Notes I briefly quoted some observations of Vanessa Luce concerning possible Ringed Turtle Dove/Mourning Dove hybridization. I expressed surprise & then quoted from Goodwin's "Pigeons and Doves of the World" concerning color changes in known hybrids. Margaret Jones called recently to remind me that she had received a couple of reports of Turtle/Mourning hybrids in the Bellaire area and had observed on one occasion what she thought was a pair of Turtle/Mourning hybrids in her yard (See Margaret's article in the March, 1985 Spoonbill). Interbreeding with Mourning Doves was suspected from the plumage appearance of individuals in all cases. Both Margaret & I are interested in any other information someone may have concerning Ringed Turtle Dove/Mourning Dove hybridization.

WESTERN KINGBIRD STUDY UPDATE

Thanks to all who have helped in the Western Kingbird study. Nesting birds have been reported at over 25 substations in south, southwest, west and northwest Houston, west Harris County and Rosenberg. For those of you who have not reported your observations (even if you did not observe any kingbirds), please send them to me so that I can complete a summary report. Thanks again.

Bob Honig

THE WORD IS (FINALLY) OUT

The Pettingell Book of Birding Records, which has been in the works for at least 18 months, is "hot off the press" and will be available for purchase at the September Ornithology Group meeting.

While this is Noel Pettingell's first book, he is no novice at writing about birds. In addition to editing local birding newsletters, he is the all-time records editor of Birding, the American Birding Association's magazine, which is circulated worldwide. His series, "The Pettingell Report," which has appeared regularly in the magazine since 1969, is the basis for his book. He has also contributed to the Guinness Book of World Records and the Congressional Record.

The Pettingell Book of Birding Records contains references to the largest, fastest and longest-migrating birds in addition to providing lists of birding records. The lists include record yearly and single-day bird counts, along with records set during the Audubon Society's annual Christmas Bird Count in North America and Venezuela. Unusual personal records, such as the largest number of birds seen perched on wires, in a single tree or through a window are included.

The book is co-authored by David Mark of New York and illustrated by Linda Feltner of Seattle. Any mail order requests should be directed to the ABA, P.O. Box 4335, Austin, Texas 78765.

SEPTEMBER IS HAWK WATCH MONTH

Because the success of the Hawk Watch is contingent upon optimum weather for migration, we are looking for participants who can go out into the field on relatively short notice. Data collected from observers will be analyzed and prepared for submission to the Hawk Migration Association of North America.

Plan to join us even if you feel a little uncertain about your "soaring raptor" skills because each group will be led by experts and the more eyes we have on the sky, the better. Interested persons should contact either Jim Morgan at 461-3080 (h) or Ron Braun at 496-3108 (h).

HAS ANNUAL AUCTION

The Houston Audubon Society will be presenting its annual auction on October 19, 1986 at the Edith L. Moore Sanctuary from 2:00-5:30 PM, with wine and cheese being served from 1:00-6:00 PM. This auction is held to raise money for perpetuating the Edith L. Moore Sanctuary as well as the Audubon Woods Sanctuary at High Island. Anyone wishing to donate items for the auction or desiring further information should call 932-1392.

