

# The SPOONBILL



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Houston, Texas, Libby Price, Editor; Ellen Red, Asst. Editor

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May, 1988

## Coming Events

Friday June 3: Deadline for Clearing House reports.  
Send to P.O. Box 271374, Houston TX 77277.

Saturday, June 18: Ornithology Group field trip with Gary Clark as leader. We'll start at Jones Forest where all the locally nesting woodpeckers can be found, including the endangered Red-Cockaded Woodpecker. Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Pine Warblers and Brown-headed Nuthatches also nest here. The next stop is Huntsville State Park where many more singing breeders are possible: Hooded, Parula and Prothonotary Warblers, and in some years even American Redstarts breed here.

If you wish to continue with us for the afternoon, bring a lunch to eat in the park. The afternoon looks as promising as the morning, for we'll move on to Lake Livingston and the upper Trinity River. Gary says he'll show us his secret spot where, if all goes well, we'll see roosting Wood Storks. The meeting place will be Jones Forest at 7:30 AM at the west entrance road. From Houston drive north on I-45 to FM 1488 (5 mi. south of Conroe). Go west on FM 1488 for 2.5 miles. Pull in to the dirt road on the left which is the western boundary of the forest, or else park on the highway and walk in about 200 yards to meet the group. Bring insect repellent.

No meeting in June; no meeting or field trip in July.

Sunday, July 3: Deadline for Clearing House reports.

## Clearing House - APRIL, 1988

CLEARING HOUSE - APRIL 1988 The month of April has brought the migrant shorebirds and warblers with it, with at least one party (EM) reporting seeing all 36 of the expected shorebirds in a single day. There were a total of 258 species reported by 27 observers. 35 species of warblers have been reported this month. The heavy rains occurring on April 29 with overnight light rains continuing into early morning of April 30 made that day one of the best fallouts of the season. 27 species of warblers were reported for that date alone. There were several birds of note seen in April which have been highlighted according to status (underline = early/late date: capitalized = unusual siting of rare bird: both = vagrant or accidental siting. Among those species reported which will affect that species status on the current UTC checklist are Red Necked Phalarope, Painted Redstart and Lazuli Bunting. (see write ups) For this report, the sighting of common or widely distributed species will be detailed by total number reported, early/late date and hi/low count. Unusual sightings will include the observer as well as county/location. CLEARING HOUSE SUBMITTAL FORMS MUST BE POSTMARKED NO LATER THAN THE FIRST OF THE FOLLOWING MONTH. We would like to thank each of you for your prompt submittals utilizing the new Clearing House submittal forms. Please feel free to offer us suggestions in making your Clearing House a useful and productive endeavor.

SPECIES	DATE (EARLY/LATE)	NUMBER (HI/LOW)	TOTAL	OBSERV	CO/LOC
Loon, Pacific	15/17	1	1		DM,RT,TM G
Loon, Common	4/30	6/2	29		
Grebe, Pied-billed	8/30	10/1	34		
Grebe, Eared	4/19	230/4	440		
Pelican, White	4/30	210/7	487		
Pelican, Brown	16	1	1	AG	G
Cormorant, Dbl.Cr.	2/30	30/1	94		
Cormorant, Oliv.	12/30	25/1	57		
Anhinga	4	6	6	OG	G
Bittern, Am.	17/24	2/1	3		
Bittern, Least	24/30	12/1	13	AG	J,MW
Heron, Gr.Blue	2/30	20/1	89		
Egret, Great	3/30	40/2	157		
Egret, Snowy	2/30	20/1	86		
Heron, Little Bl.	2/24	8/1	23		
Heron, Tricolored	2/30	20/1	37		
Egret, reddish	12/30	10/1	34		
Egret, Cattle	2/30	200/2	344		
Heron, Gr.Backed	2/30	30/1	83		
Night-Heron, Bl.Cr.	8/30	15/1	20		
Night-Heron, Y.Cr.	5/30	5/1	11		
Ibis, White	16/30	50/4	139		
Ibis, White-Faced	2/30	125/1	212		
Spoonbill, Roseate	2/30	40/2	84		
Whist.-Duck, Ful.	17/24	200/4	304		
Goose, Gr.Wh.Front.	24	2	2	G	C
Goose, Snow	24	3	3	G	H
Teal, Gr.Winged	10/16	65/2	77		

(continued on page 3)

# Noel's Niche Looking Back

by Noel Pettingell

.....10 YEARS AGO/FROM MAY, 1978 SPOONBILL

"**BACKYARD BIRDING** \*\* Here is the editor's recipe for a memorable moment in birding: a bird bath, a few trees, a trickling fountain (for alluring sound), observers, and of course, a bird that wants a bath.

"Such a combination produced joy one recent late afternoon. A Gray-cheeked Thrush landed on a low limb of the small pecan tree which shades our fountain and bird bath. Deliberate in his actions, he stared unblinkingly at both of us, then gazed at the concrete bowl, hopped down to the top of the fence and looked some more. Finally he glided down to the bath, which was barely six feet from my chair, and started splashing. Even his splashing seemed dignified and deliberate. He faced us at all times and occasionally would stand up, fasten that stern stare on us for a bit, then resume his splashing. Needless to say, we hardly dared breathe as we feasted our eyes.

"We thought this was such a rare occurrence it would probably not be repeated in a long while, but we were mistaken and delightfully so. The next evening four of us were sitting on the patio watching a Golden-winged Warbler flitting around among the Pine Siskins in the mulberry tree. It repeated the thrush's actions of perching in the pecan tree, then the fence top, the tree trunk, and finally landing on the edge of the bath. This bird didn't pay us any attention at all, readily wading into the water and splashing and dipping with abandon. It is pure joy to watch a warbler, especially a seldom-seen favorite like the Golden-winged, at eye level from six feet away! A bit of lagniappe was a male Yellow-throat who followed, but he came to drink, not to bathe."

[Former editor Margaret Jones observed these birds at her home, located at 4902 Fern in Bellaire.]

FOR OG information, checklists, maps, contact  
Maxine Davis, 10602 Cedarhurst, Houston  
77096, 723-8559.

SEND bird sightings for Clearing House to:  
Clearing House (OG), P.O. Box 271374, Houston  
TX 77277.

RARE Bird Alert Tape, sponsored by Piney Woods  
Wildlife Society: 821-2846.

SEND material for Spoonbill to Editor, Libby Price,  
3715 Sunset, Houston 77005, 665-1159.

SEND dues, subscriptions and address changes to  
Jerry Patrick, 814 St. Francis, Houston 77079.  
Members' annual dues: \$15 (ONC \$5, OG \$10).  
Spoonbill subscriptions for non-members: \$13.

## A CROWD VISITS THE VALLEY

by René Franks

The Ornithology Group field trip to the Rio Grande Valley was a popular event, attended by about 33 people (though not usually together at once). Most of the group drove down on Friday. Some stopped at Riviera on the way to see Cave Swallows and at Sarita for Buff-bellied Hummingbird.

Saturday morning found us at Santa Ana NWR, looking for the Black Crane-Hawk on the levee. Word came 'round that the bird had been spotted at Willow Lake, so we headed that way. Just as we entered the woods, a shout was heard from the levee. Everyone rushed back in time to see the Crane-Hawk flying to the east end of the refuge, diving at a few Broad-winged Hawks on the way. Not everyone got a good look, but at least we saw the bird.

Before lunch at Santa Ana we saw Least Grebe, Great Kiskadee, Couch's Kingbird, Plain Chachalaca, Ringed Kingfisher, White-tipped Dove, Altamira Oriole, Long-billed Thrasher, Olive Sparrow, Green Jay, Cinnamon Teal and Golden-fronted Woodpecker, among other more ordinary birds.

Hundreds of Broad-winged Hawks rose on thermals and headed north in large kettles, an impressive sight. After noon the sensible members of the group rested from the heat, rode the interpretive tram or watched the Green Jays and Altamira Orioles at the photography blind. The more ambitious quickly regretted our decisions to make long hikes, as few birds were out and about.

Saturday evening after supper we reassembled to look for owls and Pauraques at Bentsen-Rio Grande State Park. This proved to be a fruitless endeavor. A tree inhabited by an Elf Owl on the Chaparral Trail had fallen and the owl had, of course, found a new home. Due to the size of the group, and the lack of a vehicle large enough to hold us all, the usual method of searching for Pauraques by driving slowly through the park was impossible. We walked the road near the far end of the park and heard both Pauraques and Screech Owls, but saw none. Finally we split up and drove around separately.

Early Sunday before the group met, several people did find Pauraques. By walking around the trailer sites the group located Bronzed Cowbirds and two Clay-colored Robins. We also admired a fine pair of Great Horned Owls at their nest. One peered over the edge of the nest while the other stood guard on an adjacent limb. We were told that a Tropical Parula had been seen in the tent camping area, and sure enough, a Zzeeeeee! like that of the Northern Parula alerted us to his position. It was a beautiful male who politely stayed in the area long enough to be admired. We also spotted a Yellow-throated Warbler nearby.

Blue Buntings had been seen most frequently in the afternoon, so just after 2:00 PM we moved out in force to find them. Both a male and a female were soon located feeding at campsite 27. Just as the stragglers were arriving to see them, the birds were startled by a small boy on the world's noisiest riding toy. Those of us who had not gotten a look settled down to wait for the buntings' return. It took about an hour, but at last we were rewarded

SPECIES	DATE (EARLY/LATE)	NUMBER (HI/LOW)	TOTAL	OBSERV	CO/LOC	SPECIES	DATE (EARLY/LATE)	NUMBER (HI/LOW)	TOTAL	OBSERV	CO/LOC
Duck, Mottled	2/30	40/2	81			Dove, Mourning	2/30	110/1	366		
Mallard	24/30	3/2	7			Dove, Inca	2/30	20/1	106		
Teal, Bl.Winged	10/30	250/3	593			Parakeet, Monk	30	2	2		
Teal, Cinnamon	17	2	2	ThM	G	Cuckoo, Bl.Billed	30	2	2		
Shoveler, North.	8/30	50/2	129			Cuckoo, Y.Billed	8/30	83/1	132		
Gadwall	10/30	10/1	26			Barn-Owl, Common	24	5	5		
Wigeon, Am.	10	3	3	BH	WHC	Owl, Great Horned	24	1	1		
Canvasback	24	2	2	G	J	OWL, BURROWING	16	1	1	RB	HI
Bufflehead	24	1	1	G	J	Owl, Barred	27	2	2		
Merganser, R.Br.	4/24	5/1	13			Owl, Short-Eared	21	3	3	JJ(no notes submitted)	
Vulture, Black	2/24	7/1	18			Owl, Screech	1/9	3/1	1		
Vulture, Turkey	2/24	10/1	31			Nighthawk, Common	16/30	26/1	78		
Osprey	16/30	1	4			Chuck-will's-widow	5/30	1	6		
Kite, Bl.Sh.	17/30	4/1	9			Whip-poor-will	24	2	2	G	H
Kite, Miss.	12/24	28/1	29	B	H,SJS	Swift, Chimney	3/30	120/2	418		
Harrier, Northern	2/24	8/1	15			Hummingbird, R.Thr.	2/30	140/1	306		
Hawk, Sh.Shinned	2	2/1	3			Hummingbird, Rufous	1	1	1	JM	H
Hawk, Cooper's	24	1	1			Kingfisher, Belted	4/30	8/1	29		
Hawk, R.Sh.	2/30	1/1	4			Woodpecker, Red H.	16/24	2/1	2		
Hawk, Br. Winged	2/30	1	7			Woodpecker, Pil.	1/29	2/1	2		
Hawk, Swainson's	2/24	4/1	13			Woodpecker, R.Bell.	2/30	3/1	18		
Hawk, Red-Tail.	24	1	1			Sapsucker, Y.Bell.	2/30	4/1	15		
Caracara, Cr.	24	1	1			Woodpecker, Downy	2/23	4/2	34		
Kestrel, Am.	2/17	1	9			Flicker, N.	2/5	1/1	3		
Falcon, Perigrine	4	1	1	CS	C	Wood-Pewee, East.	16/30	55/1	102		
Pheasant, R.Necked	1	1	1			Flycatcher, Acadian	24/30	32/1	53		
Bobwhite, N.	23	3	3			Flycat. "Traill's"	30	30/5	35	EM,ARD	G
Rail, Clapper	8/30	4/1	14			Flycatcher, Least	30	1	1		
Rail, King	17/24	15/10	25			Phoebe, East.	16	1	1		
Rail, Virginia	12/30	1	3			Flycatcher, Gr.Cr.	2/30	1	14		
Sora	13/30	6/1	19			Kingbird, East.	2/30	20/1	70		
Gallinule, Purple	16/24	7/1	12			Flycatcher, Sc Tail	1/30	25/1	50		
Moorhen, Common	2/30	40/2	84			Lark, Horned	10/24	5/1	7		
Coot, Am.	2/30	300/1	544			Martin, Purple	2/30	70/1	293		
Plover, Bl.Bellied	8/30	210/1	447			Swallow, Tree	8/30	2000/4	4649		
Golden-Plover, L.	2/30	350/2	581			Swallow, N.R.Wing	2/30	500/2	730		
Plover, Snowy	4/24	6/1	18			Swallow, Bank	17/30	125/1	175		
Plover, Wilson's	4/30	40/1	71			Swallow, Cliff	17/30	2/1	4		
Plover, Sempalm.	16/24	400/5	755			Swallow, Barn	3/30	900/1	2531		
Plover, Piping	4/24	40/1	115			Jay, Blue	2/30	21/2	156		
Killdeer	2/30	200/1	443			Crow, Am.	2/24	30/1	63		
Oystercatcher, Am.	4/17	6/1	12			Crow, Fish	24/30	12/1	25		
Stilt, Bl.Necked	10/30	70/2	203			Chickadee, Carolina	2/30	12/1	47		
Avocet, Am.	12/21	6000/5	10525			Titmouse, Tufted	2/30	8/1	19		
Yellowlegs, G.	2/30	100/1	237			Wren, Carolina	2/30	1/5	19		
Yellowlegs, L.	2/30	700/2	1460			Wren, Sedge	8/30	20/1	45		
Sandpiper, Solitary	16/30	6/1	31			Wren, Marsh	17/30	10/1	19		
Willet	2/30	410/1	722			Kinglet, Ruby-Cr.	2/24	20/1	61		
Sandpiper, Spotted	13/30	15/1	55			Gnatcatcher, Bl.Gr.	2/24	20/1	63		
Sandpiper, Upland	10/24	13/1	42			Bluebird, East.	6/30	1/1	2		
Whimbrel	16/30	85/1	131			Veery	13/30	135/1	253		
Curlw, L.Billed	2/24	40/1	72			Thrush, Gr.Cheek.	16/30	31/1	64		
Godwit, Hudsonian	16/24	9/1	12			Thrush, Swainson's	8/30	325/1	473		
Godwit, Marbled	4/24	60/1	132			Thrush, Hermit	2/20	4/1	7		
Turnstone, Ruddy	16/30	140/1	320			Thrush, Wood	8/30	35/1	68		
Knot, Red	16/21	40/9	105			Robin, Am.	6/30	3/1	11		
Sanderling	8/30	900/1	1894			Catbird, Gray	2/30	240/1	479		
Sandpiper, Semiplm.	16/30	200/2	345			Mockingbird, N.	2/30	25/1	178		
Sandpiper, West.	2/24	200/2	5802			Thrasher, Br.	2/30	25/1	85		
Sandpiper, Least	16/30	200/1	374			Waxwing, Cedar	2/30	200/1	563		
Sandpiper, Wh.rump	17/24	11/5	30			Shrike, Loggerhead	2/30	30/1	112		
Sandpiper, Baird's	3/24	7/1	30			Starling, E.	2/30	80/1	282		
Sandpiper, Pectoral	10/24	65/1	155			Vireo, Wh.Eyed	2/30	40/1	148		
Dunlin	8/24	3600/1	5925			Vireo, Solitary	2/24	9/1	19		
Sandpiper, Stilt	12/23	210/6	346			Vireo, Y.Thr.	2/30	26/1	75		
Sandpiper, Buff-br.	17/24	6/3	9			Vireo, Warbling	19/24	5/1	13		
Dowitcher, S.Bill	8/24	450/10	600			Vireo, Phil.	20/20	21/1	39		
Dowitcher, L.Bill	16/23	2000/50	23000			Vireo, R.Eyed	2/30	10/3	145		
Snipe, Common	2/30	4/1	16			Warbler, Bl.Winged	2/30	30/1	89		
Phalarope, Wilson's	16/24	60/9	340			Warbler, Gold.Wing	17/30	18/1	28		
PHALAROPE, RED-NECK.30	2	2	2	ARD	G	Warbler, Tennessee	2/30	390/1	665		
Gull, Laughing	2/30	800/5	2770			Warbler, Or.Crown	2/19	4/1	19		
Gull, Franklin's	3/24	5/1	6			Warbler, Nashville	2/24	3/1	12		
Gull, Bonaparte's	17/24	5/1	6			Parula, N.	2/30	30/1	99		
Gull, Ring-Billed	3/30	50/15	214			Warbler, Yellow	15/30	600/1	1289		
Gull, Herring	8/24	42/2	127			Warbler, Ch.Sided	19/30	75/2	152		
GULL, GLAUCOUS	16	1	1	DM,G	BF	Warbler, Magnolia	24/30	180/2	379		
Kittiwake, Bl.Leg.	16	1	1	AG,DM	G	Warbler, Cape May	30	1	1	EM	J
Tern, Gull-billed	16/24	20/1	37			Warbler, Bl.Th.Bl.	24/30	1/1	2	G,EM	G,J
Tern, Caspian	3/30	75/2	156			Warbler, Y.Rumped	2/24	230/1	536		
Tern, Royal	3/30	300/1	836			Warbler, Bl.Th.Gr.	7/30	90/1	241		
Tern, Sandwich	3/24	140/2	454			Warbler, Blackburn.	2/30	32/1	51		
Tern, Common	17/30	65/1	737			Warbler, Y.Thr.	2/19	2/19	1/7		
Tern, Forster's	3/30	200/3	737			Warbler, Pine	1/17	20/1	41		
Tern, Least	3/30	525/1	526			Warbler, Palm	10/24	2/1	4		
Tern, Black	16/30	40/2	123			Warbler, Bay-Br.	10/30	450/1	633		
Skimmer, Black	8/30	350/1	856			Warbler, Blackpoll	16/30	4/1	16		
Dove, Rock	2/30	50/5	254			Warbler, Cerulean	10/30	6/1	28		
Turtle-Dove, Ring.	2	1	1			Warbler, Bl.& White	2/30	275/1	621		
Dove, Wh.Winged	3/30	42/1	135								

SPECIES	DATE (EARLY/LATE)	NUMBER (HI/LOW)	TOTAL	OBSERV	CO/LOC
Redstart, Am.	17/30	225/1	352		
Warbler, Prothon.	2/30	3/1	15		
Warbler, Worm-Eat.	2/30	12/1	47		
Warbler, Swainson's	2/10	1/1	2		
Ovenbird	16/30	280/1	531		
Waterthrush, N.	16/30	40/1	86		
Waterthrush, L.	2/30	5/1	12		
Warbler, Kentucky	2/30	48/1	114		
Yellowthroat, Com.	2/30	70/1	287		
Warbler, Hooded	2/30	260/1	534		
Warbler, Wilson's	10/30	1/1	7		
Warbler, Canada	23/30	3/1	7		
REDSTART, PAINTED	19	1	1	RVN	F
Chat, Yellow Br.	23/30	4/2	10		
Tanager, Summer	2/30	115/1	317		
Tanager, Scarlet	2/30	210/2	303		
Tanager, West.	15/30	2/1	2	AG, MTM	G/HI
Cardinal, Northern	2/30	40/1	210		
Grosbeak, R. Breast.	19/30	240/2	426		
Grosbeak, Blue	8/30	100/1	242		
BUNTING, LAZULI	30	1	1	DM	G
Bunting, Indigo	2/30	2500/1	4899		
Bunting, Painted	16/30	95/1	132		
Dickcissel	23/30	300/2	1112		
Towhee, R. Sided	2/10	2/2	4		
Sparrow, Chipping	6/8	1/1	2		
SPARROW, CLAY COL.	24	1	1	MA	C, AWR
Sparrow, Field	8	2	2		
Sparrow, Vesper	24	1	1		
Sparrow, Lark	10/30	4/2	8		
Sparrow, Savannah	8/30	40/2	148		
Sparrow, Sh. tailed	16/24	3/1	4		
Sparrow, Seaside	19/30	2/1	5		
Sparrow, Song	24/30	1/1	2		
Sparrow, Lincoln's	13/30	6/1	13		
Sparrow, Swamp	13/30	3/1	11		
Sparrow, Wh. Throat.	2/30	30/1	136		
Sparrow, Wh. Crowned	13	3	3		
Bobolink	30	25	25	MTM	G
Blackbird, R. Wing	2/30	2000/2	4282		
Meadowlark, East.	2/30	200/1	334		
Blackbird, Y. Head.	19/30	12/1	24		
Grackle, Gr. Tail.	2/30	200/1	662		
Grackle, Boat Tail.	2/30	150/2	358		
Grackle, Common	2/30	200/1	327		
Cowbird, Br. Headed	2/30	300/1	543		
Oriole, Orchard	2/30	170/1	354		
Oriole, North.	2/30	430/1	727		
SISKIN, PINE	1/30	20/1	20	BH, DM	H, G, HI
Goldfinch, Am.	2/30	2/1	3		
Sparrow, House	2/30	60/1	212		

## CLEARING HOUSE NOTES - APRIL, 1988

Bufflehead 4/24/88 Mike Austin  
 Fine drake in full breeding plumage. Small, stiff-tailed black duck with distinctive round head and small, dark bill with white saddle over ear coverts. White flanks. Pleasure Island/Sabine Lake, JC. From 50yds with morning sun behind observers. This is a new late date for this bird. Previous late date was 4/14/62.

GLAUCOUS GULL 4/16/88 Derek Muschalek  
 Observed this very large heavy bodied gull at BF. Field marks noted: A gigantic all white gull with pink legs and brilliant translucent wing tips; pale pink bill with black tip; bird flew over my head into flock of 4 Herring Gulls; Bird was larger bodied than all 4 Herring Gulls. Size and translucent wing tips eliminate albino Herring Gull, the only similar species. 60X Nikon at 50 yds.

RED NECKED PHALAROPE 4/30/88 Arch and Ruth Dillard  
 Time: About 4pm. Observed 5-8 mts. Weather: Clear, Clouds  
 Location: East G.I. along road by new beachfront condos and unfinished golf course on the dunes. Small pond on north side of this road between east condos and pay booth on the w. end of East Beach.  
 Both observers had excellent view at 45 yds. 2 individuals were spotted among 12 phalaropes because of smaller size. Actually spotted from slowly moving car as different from the other (Wilson's) phalaropes due to size and general appearance of having heavy dark caps. The 2 slightly smaller phalaropes had shorter, thin beaks and darker heavier caps with a dark patch through ear. One bird was paler and more in winter plumage and the other was darker and had chestnut color on the back of the neck and a brownish black back. The paler bird was observed briefly in flight, just traveling a few feet, and had thin wing stripes. The darker bird did not fly. Darker bird probably was

a male in breeding plumage. Paler bird was in winter plumage possibly in transition to breeding plumage because neck showed a slightly rufous color. The remaining 8-10 birds were obvious Wilson's phalaropes with the typical slightly biased stripe down the side of the neck.

BURROWING OWL 4/16/88 Randy Beavers  
 Time: 0750 Location: Oil field Road .5mi N of HI, GC, approx. 40yds on the south side of road near the pond (flooded flat).  
 Observed an owl perched on a low horizontal branch 2 ft. above the ground from 40yds. The owl appeared to be slightly larger than a screech-owl, with long legs, and a round head lacking ear tufts. Owl was sandy in color, not too unlike the general color of a barn owl. Owl remained perched for more than 2 hrs. and was observed by many birders.

PAINTED REDSTART 4/19/88 Virginia and Roger Norton  
 Time: 1630-1930 Seen 30 mts. over 4 hours. Weather: Sunny  
 Seen in scattered trees between open field and apartments in Sugarland, HC. Warbler size and shape. Flitting actively and feeding in trees. Description: Red belly first drew observers' attention, then black head and breast, white splash on wings and white outer edges of tail were all noted the entire time the bird was in view. Similar species eliminated: Red belly and white on wings and tail eliminate the American Redstart, and the Slate-throated Redstart is eliminated by the lack of white on wing and lack of a large amount of white on tail. Photos were taken by Roger Norton and will be submitted to the Checklist Committee.

LAZULI BUNTING 4/30/88 Derek Muschalek  
 Brilliant adult male observed feeding on gravel road on Sun Oil property on Bolivar Peninsul, GC. Observed less than 10 seconds, at bird's front side only. Field marks noted: Bright cinnamon breast and sides; sky blue head and throat; white under belly; small conical bill; I was unable to get a look at the bird's wings or back. However, this bird did seem to be a lighter blue than the numerous Indigo Buntings in his company. Observer has seen Lazuli Buntings previously at Big Bend.

## CLEARING HOUSE CODES

County  
 B=Brazoria  
 C=Chambers  
 F=Ft. Bend  
 G=Galveston  
 J=Jefferson  
 W=Waller  
 U=Upper Texas Coast  
 Observer  
 AG=Aldrich/Gottsching  
 ARD=Arch & Ruth Dillard  
 BA=Beard/Austin  
 BH=Bob Honig  
 CS=Carraviotis/Schwartz  
 DM=Derek Muschalek  
 EM=Eubanks/Morgan  
 G=Austin/Gast/Beard/Bookout  
 JB=Judy Boyce  
 JJ=J Baker/J Wilkin  
 JM=Jim Morgan  
 LP=Libby Price  
 MA=Mike Austin  
 MBM=M & B Moore  
 MJ=Margaret Jane  
 MO=M & L Owens  
 MT=Michele Thatcher  
 MTM=Michael/Thacker/Muschalek  
 OG=Gretchen Oldham  
 PM=Peggy Milstead

RB=Randy Beavers  
 RM=Robt. Moore  
 RVN=R & V Norton  
 RT=Rob Thacker  
 TM=Tom Michael  
 ThM=Thacker/Muschalek  
 UC=Uzar/Carroll

Location  
 AW=Anahuac  
 AB=Armand Bayou  
 BB=Brazos Bend SP  
 BC=Bear Creek Park  
 BF=Bolivar Flats  
 BR=Barker Reservoir  
 BW=Brazoria NWR  
 EM=Edith L. Moore NS  
 GI=Galveston Island SP  
 HA=Houston Arboretum  
 HI=High Island  
 HP=Hermann Park  
 MA=Mercer Arboretum  
 MP=Memorial Park  
 MW=McFaddin NWR  
 SB=San Bernard NWR  
 SJ=San Jacinto SP  
 SL=San Luis Pass  
 SR=Sea Rim SP  
 TCD=Texas City Dike  
 WM=White Memorial Park  
 WHC=West Harris County

County codes must be included. Location codes are optional. When submitting forms, only that information which changes need be indicated after each species (i.e. date, observer can be indicated at top of form only.) Boundaries are: BF=Hwy 87 to Gulf; beach access rd. to N. Jetty. HI=Intracoastal Waterway to beach; 1 mile each way on Hwy 87. SLP=starts 1 mile NE of toll bridge, then to end of point. TCD=Dike, seawall, shore and ponds west of seawall. WHC=U.S. 290 south to I-10; Hwy 6 west to Harris Co. line. Birds seen in one trip in all or many counties can be designated UTC.

## THE APRIL 30 FALLOUT

by Jim Morgan

As has been the case through much of this decade, April, 1988 had no significant rainfall, that is until April 29, when the skies broke loose and dropped as much as five inches of rain along parts of the UTC. Rain continued in lighter amounts overnight, ending during the early morning hours of April 30. Total rainfall on Galveston Island during this 20-24-hour period amounted to seven inches at some locations. This heavy storm was caused by interaction between a warm front moving off the Gulf of Mexico and an upper level low pressure cell moving in from the west. This system was quickly followed by a line, or trough, of low pressure from the northwest that developed into a cold front as it passed through Central Texas and off the UTC early on April 30.

The setting was perfect for a significant passerine fallout. Ted Eubanks and I started the morning at 7:00 a.m. at High Island. The woods were "good" but not as full of birds as they have been during other fallouts we have witnessed. The real "action" was to be found later on along the dune line of the beach and the adjacent lines of vegetation near the coastal highway. Early on the morning of the 30th Elric McHenry and his wife stopped near Caplen on Bolivar Peninsula and counted mixed flocks of passerines flying in low off the Gulf at a rate of 100 birds per minute. This movement continued for a period of one hour, at this one spot, before they decided to move on to the woods at High Island to join other birders there. Many birders were able to witness this event since it happened on a Saturday. This was the first weekend fallout in over seven years.

After thoroughly working all the woods at High Island, where we found Black-and-white Warbler and Ovenbird to be the two most common species, Ted and I began birding the dune line along Highway 87 northeast of High Island. Five hours later we ended up at Sabine Pass after witnessing the best display of passerine migrants along Highway 87 that we have ever seen in the spring or in the fall, and this area is one we work frequently during migrant groundings.

There was a virtual kaleidoscope of color along the dunes, in the salt cedars and in the other vegetation near the road. Orioles, buntings, grosbeaks, thrushes, vireos and warblers, particularly Yellow Warblers were everywhere. We even found Cape May Warbler and Black-throated Blue Warbler along the highway. With each passing car clouds of passerines would be scared up from the vegetation, circle and return, or fly off to the nearest salt cedar. It was truly spectacular, and we could have missed it if we had stayed in the woods all day.

Some comparisons between the woods and the area we worked along Highway 87 are in order. The table below should provide the reader with the ability to judge where the birds were on April 30. The totals shown are compiled from four separate recordings during the day for different locations and time periods. Recordings were both manual and by tape recorder.

Species	High Island	Hwy 87
Cuckoos	20	65
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	80	60
Brown-backed Thrushes	175	316
Gray Catbird	100	240
Vireos	214	141
Tennessee Warbler	150	240
Yellow Warbler	55	440
Black-and-white Warbler	240	35
American Redstart	110	115
Ovenbird	225	55
Total warbler individuals	1356	1285
Tanagers	140	185
Grosbeaks	155	185
Indigo Buntings	600	1400
Orchard Oriole	50	120
Northern Oriole	100	330

Because the birds were flying low as they crossed the coastal highway, numerous individuals were victims of passing vehicles and "road kills" were common. In addition, many individuals did not make landfall, as several observers reported dead birds along the water line for the next several days.

Because of the many birds grounded and the high pressure ridge in the Texas weather pattern which created northerly winds for several days, birding continued to be excellent along the coast at least through May 4. However, if you missed Saturday, April 30, you missed the "big one," at least up until the time of writing this article, May 9. There is no doubt in my mind that UTC spring fallouts continue to be one of the world's truly spectacular events.

## TEXAS BREEDING BIRDS TO DATE

In the April report of the Texas Breeding Bird Atlas Project evidence of breeding was found for 288 species. 31 of these were species not included in the list of expected birds! 220 species, not 218 as reported in the April Spoonbill, were confirmed, 39 were probable and 29 are in the possible category.

These results are remarkable for the first year of the project. However, more atlasers are needed, not only to confirm the rest of the species for which evidence of breeding was found, but to cover a representative number of quadrangles in this huge state. If you have delayed signing up, get in touch with Ted Eubanks at 666-7639 and help this program continue its great work.

Even if you are not prepared to sign up, take note of the following species for which evidence is especially wanted, and report any signs of nesting so that an atlaser can follow them up: Brown Pelican, White Pelican, Bald Eagle, Attwater's Prairie Chicken, American Woodcock, Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Bachman's Sparrow.

Finally, send a contribution in any amount, because individual contributions are urgently needed for office expenses of the project. Send your gift to Texas Breeding Bird Atlas Project, Dept of Wildlife and Fisheries Science, Texas A&M, College Station TX 77843-2258.

(continued from page 2)

by excellent views of the female and tantalizing glimpses of the male.

Sunday evening we all drove to the Falcon Dam area. Those who were camping there saw numerous species upon arrival, including Vermilion Flycatcher, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Scaled Quail, Cassin's Sparrow, Black-throated Sparrow, Osprey (with fish), Crested Caracara and Harris' Hawk.

Monday morning we walked in the Falcon State Recreation Area and found Cactus Wrens, Curve-billed Thrashers and more Altamira Orioles. Then we headed to Salineno, where we were confident of finding Brown Jays and Audubon's Orioles, but were disappointed. It seems that the birds which had been frequenting feeders had become scarce in the past few weeks, since they were busy beginning the breeding season. The moral of this story is never count your lifers until they are seen.

However some interesting things were found at Salineno. Pat, one of the women feeding the recently departed birds, showed us a partly submerged tree on which numerous huge snakes were draped. We decided that these were probably Diamond-backed Water Snakes. In the river there was a strange male duck, apparently part Mallard and part something else. It had a green head with a yellow spot around the eye, and a body marked like that of a Gadwall. We saw a Ringed Kingfisher across the river which had caught a large leopard from and was repeatedly bashing it against a branch, presumably to soften it up. The bird pummeled the poor frog for at least fifteen minutes before we got tired of waiting for him to eat it and left.

Most of the group departed at this time for the long drive home, but some continued to Falcon Dam, where nothing of great interest was found except an indigo snake, which we found crawling against a concrete wall, and were able to capture. It was a beautiful, glossy black with a pinkish belly. We all admired its color and soft skin, then released it. An Osprey and some American White Pelicans were seen soaring over the spillway channel.

All in all the trip was successful. Although no Green Kingfishers, Hook-billed Kites or Gray Hawks were seen, birds missed on one trip always provide an incentive to make another.

#### THE SPOONBILL STAFF

Editor	Libby Price
Assistant Editor	Ellen Red
Clearing House Editors:	Lynne Aldrich, Rene and Andrew Franks, Wally Gardner and Peter Gottschling
Art Editor	Linda Feltner
Layout Artist	Connie Clark
Typing	Libby Price
Labels	Peggy Milstead
Mailing	Connie Schimbor
Checklist Committee	Ted Eubanks, Jr. Noel Pettingell and Jim Morgan

#### MINUTES OF OG MEETING, MAY 12, 1988

The meeting began at 7:45 P.M. with a program given by Allan Mueller, chief of ecological services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for the National Wildlife Refuge Systems on the Upper Texas Coast. He described the various activities of the U.S.F.W., and also explained that the Endangered Species Act applies to animals, not plants, and sometimes only to certain territorial populations (i.e. Brown Pelican only in Texas and Louisiana). His interesting talk and slides (especially the red wolf substitute) informed us of the different threatened and endangered species of the U.T.C.

Treasurer Jerry Patrick announced a balance of \$3,165 and a \$4,000 C.D. He reminded members to bring aluminum cans to each meeting.

Rob Thacker, Chairman, introduced Andrew Franks, Field Trip Chairman who announced that the next Chairman will be Don Richardson, who will lead the May trip to White Park and Lake Charlotte. Franks announced that Gary Clark will lead the June 18th trip to Jones State Forest (see Coming Events).

Thacker then applauded the continuing efforts of Marion Taylor, who as our Bayou Manor sponsor, must attend every O.G. meeting. Ed Rozenburg moved that the O.G. again contribute \$150.00 to Bayou Manor for their kindness in allowing the group to use their auditorium, and the motion carried.

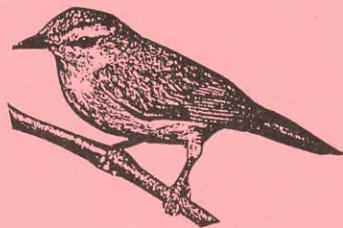
Ted Eubanks, Jr. asked for volunteers for the Texas Breeding Bird survey; and Richard Uzar urged more individual gifts to the project, which may have to cut office services due to a probable \$5,000 shortfall this year.

Peggy Milstead reported that only 350 checklists remain, and asked for direction in disposing of those. After some discussion, members voted to sell the remaining current checklists for twenty-five cents each, and to give no group discount. Ted Eubanks announced that the new updated checklist will be available by next spring.

Ed Rozenburg, new O.G. Chairman, presented the library with a copy of Hawks in Flight in honor of retiring Chairman Rob Thacker.

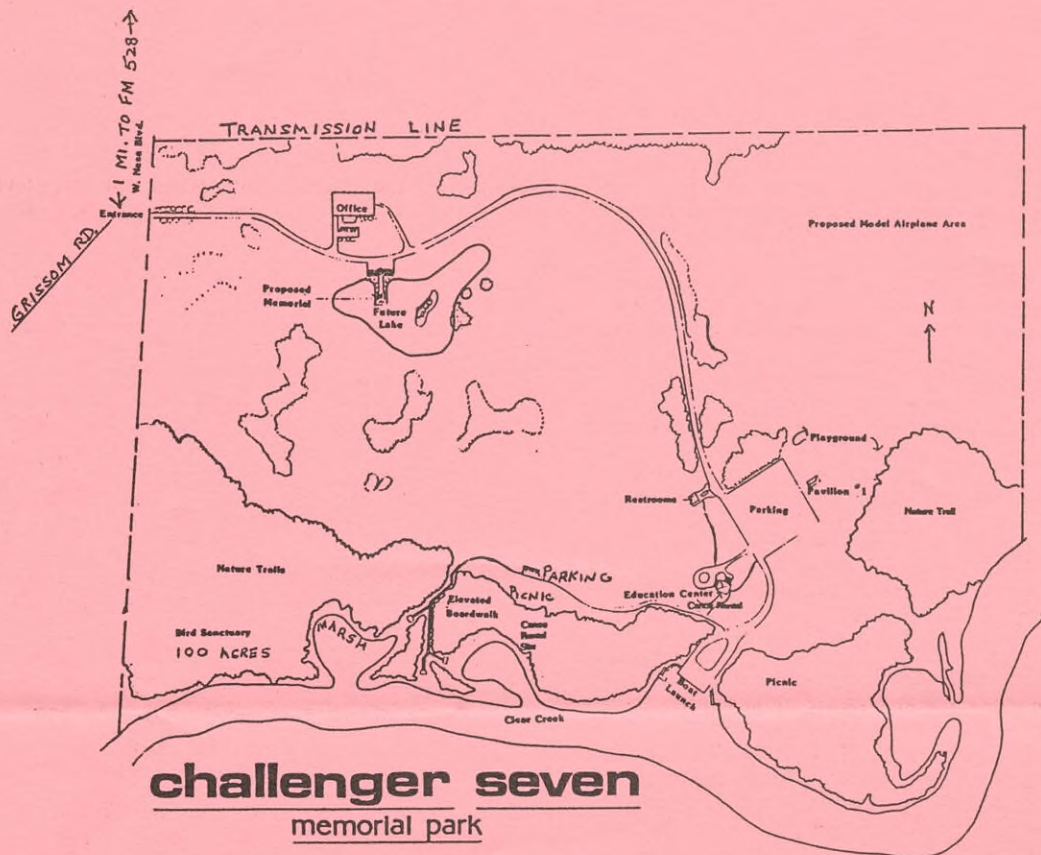
The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 P.M.

Caroline Callery, Secretary



The Red-eyed Vireo sings from dawn until dusk during its breeding period. At the rate of 35 to 70 phrases per minute, it sings well over 25,000 phrases per day during this time.

## CHALLENGER 7 MEMORIAL PARK: A SOUTHEAST NATURAL AREA by Noel Pettingell



Located in extreme southeast Harris County, Challenger 7 Memorial Park was opened to the public in May 1985 and dedicated to the crew of the Challenger Space Shuttle flight of January 28, 1986. The most outstanding feature of this well-planned park is the 900 feet of elevated boardwalk through a forested area with three shelters overlooking marshlands and Clear Creek, which forms the southern boundary. There is a paved road from the entrance to the boat launch and picnic area at the creek. An unpaved road near the boat ramp leads to a parking area, more picnic tables, the boardwalk and nature trails.

A short distance beyond the boardwalk is a path to the right of the main trail which leads into an open, grassy area where a pair of resident Black-shouldered Kites are often seen. Another path after the grasslands and to the left of the main trail skirts a marsh and then passes through woodlands to Clear Creek. The main trail ends in the 100-acre bird sanctuary at the southwestern corner of the park.

Throughout the year a pair of White-tailed Hawks are frequently seen near the transmission line along the north boundary. The marsh and woodland

trail to Clear Creek is best for warblers, vireos, thrushes and other landbird migrants in late April and early May. The boardwalk, which is six to nine feet above the ground, enables birders to obtain better looks at tree-top warblers and other migrants as well as wintering sparrows, wrens, etc., and the shelters are most useful for birdwatching during sudden showers.

Challenger 7 Park is one of ten units comprising the Clear Creek Parks Chain, seven of which are now open to the public, and each of which contains nature or jogging trails. Precinct One Commissioner El Franco Lee is to be commended for his efforts in preserving and making accessible large segments of the natural environment for present and future residents in this part of Harris County.

Challenger 7 Park is 21 miles southeast of downtown Houston, and can be reached by taking I45 south to Exit 25, NASA/FM528, bearing right before the underpass to FM 528 and then left on West NASA Blvd. (Watch for the park sign) exactly one mile to the park entrance on the left. The park is open from 8:00 AM to 9:00 PM April through October, and 8:00 AM to 6:00 in winter. Maps may be obtained near the entrance.

## SOME WISE OWLS MAY BE UNWISE

In February we reported on the Barn and Screech Owls which nest every year in the owl boxes that Diane and Doyle Wise placed on their ten-acre lot in Alvin. The Barn Owls which had just arrived have been rearing only one chick. In the second week of May Diane saw this chick doing a sort of dance in the box, and she immediately suspected ants, because ants had invaded the Screech Owl box last year. Sure enough, ants were busily going up and down the 30-foot pole. With much back-breaking labor Doyle took down the pole, Diane raked three inches of bone, fur, maggots and ants out of the box and then treated the chick, box and ground with 5% Sevin dust. (Any higher percentage would have been toxic.)

The chick was very large and partly fledged, with some brown in the wings and with facial disks, but the head was fuzzy and the claws not as strong as an adult's. Like the Screech Owl chicks last year it dropped to its back with claws up in a defensive posture and hissed while being treated. With the box in place again the chick seems quite well to date.

The Screech Owl box was invaded by a squirrel in January and the owls then disappeared, but by April the squirrel had also gone. On April 23 Diane noted a lot of grackles screaming around the box and soon a Screech Owl popped out of the box and fled to the woods, but when Diane looked in the box it was empty. At this time of year Diane usually saw the female hanging out of the box at twilight, and her chicks were large enough to be heard. By the end of May they would leave the box.

On May 10, however, with the temperature at 90°, the grackles chased one owl to the woods and another was hanging out of the box, panting heavily. That night Diane saw a clean nest in the box, but no eggs. Again on May 12 she saw an owl go into and then out of the box. She is afraid that the pair is trying to start a family again, but that the box will be too hot for them. Time will tell who is wiser, Diane or the owls.

## ADVICE TO THE BIRD-LORN

Dear Robin and Phoebe,  
I don't believe what I'm Heron. It's that Ptarmigan and Avocet on going to the Valley birding, and now they Teal me that you were Wigeon that you could go, too. I can't go this year as I've had a Ruff time of it since my fall in the bicycle race. I had to Swallow my pride and realize I'm Knot as young as I used to be. I was going a little too Swift for the last Tern and didn't see the Rock Wren I came around the curve. No serious injuries, but I am Limpkin a little. I have no Egrets about it, but at my age I should have had a little Redstart on the younger racers. Let me know when you Toucan get some time off. I am Veery serious about getting together with you for a little Chat. If Euphonia and there's no answer, try again. All I have to do is grab a Cotinga hat and I'm ready. Your friend,

Martin

A. Dear Martin,  
It's a Pitta about your Thick-Knee. If Toucanet race safely, do it after spring migration, not before, is my advice. As for my phoning you, my Couch's Kingbird would not like that, so I must Chicken out. You will have to go to McAllen to Chat with Robin. She took my Pheasant little joke about becoming a Cockatiel waitress seriously, and last I heard she was a Bar-headed Goose. She'll wear a blonde wig to work (to get more tips, she said) but without her Night-Heron she's a Redhead. Good birding!

Siskinly,

Phoebe

[Martin's last name is House, but Martin is a pseudonym. Phoebe has shamed The Spoonbill enough with her dreadful puns without our taking credit for his..Ed]

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