



THE SPOONBILL

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VOLUME XVIII, No. 6

October, 1967

* There was a young fellow named Wright *
* Who studied the birds in their flight. *
* "If these sparrows can fly, *
* Why in thunder can't I?" *
* Quoth he, and he proved he was right. *
* -Washington D.C., by Howard K. *
* Smith, 1967, p.97, Random House *
* New York *

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COMING EVENTS

- November 14 (Tuesday) Regular ONC meeting, in the Garden Center, 1500 Hermann Drive, at 8 PM. "Nature Photography" will be discussed by Dr. John L. Tveten.
- November 18 (Saturday) Regular ONC field trip to Winedale and Round Top, led by Wallace C. Mebane, Jr. See your Nature Club Notes for details.
- November 26 (Sunday) Regular OG field trip to Freeport and environs, led by Ben Feltner. Meet at 6:30 AM in the Weingarten's parking lot at Gulfgate Shopping Center.
- December 30 (Saturday) Houston Christmas Bird Count led by Dr. John L. Tveten. See announcement immediately below:

HOUSTON CHRISTMAS COUNT --Saturday, December 30, 1967

It may seem rather premature to be worrying about a Christmas count, but that time is rapidly approaching. It takes a great deal of organizing and preparation, so your prompt response is necessary.

This granddaddy of birding field trips is a lot of fun as well as being valuable to our hobby. If you can take part, call or write: John L. Tveten, 512 Inwood Dr., Baytown, Texas 77520. (583-4431). Please don't procrastinate- it's a lot easier for each of you to drop a card in the mail than for one person to call every birder.

Again: Saturday, December 30. The evening meeting will be held at the Tower Restuarant in Baytown. There will be more details in future Spoonbills, but get your reservations in now.

MASKED DUCKS HAUNT ANAHUAC IN PRE-HALLOWE'EN CAPER!

A strange but welcome visitor to the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge was reported this month. Russ Clapper, of the Refuge, says, "If you find the bird and watch it for a few minutes, 'it' will stretch its wings and show white speculum." This unusual visitor is none other than the Masked Duck!

Early on the mornings of October 3 and 4, one adult with female markings was seen at the Shoveler Pond near the second old boardwalk, as one drives in. At the time this was reported, she was usually present all day. Observers should stay in auto to avoid flushing "her". She was seen with one to four young ducklings, still downy and just a few days old. The bird is very shy and moves from open water near the old board walk east of pump into grass and reeds of the pond.

The lone "female" first reported by Mrs. Cornelius from Beaumont about September 1, was observed again on October 4 in company with Mrs. Cornelius, Mrs. Van Zandt, Mrs. Bills, Mrs. Clapper, and Mrs. Kennedy. Mrs. Cornelius confirmed that this was the same bird observed about September 1. Mrs. Cornelius recalls seeing a duck much earlier that was observed at some dis-

MASKED DUCKS (con't from p. 1)

tance through a scope that looked like a male Masked Duck (not positively identified).

Among those visiting the Refuge on Saturday, October 7, were John and Gloria Tveten and Armand Yramategui, who discussed the possibility that the lone adult Masked Duck with female markings may have been a male in eclipse plumage.

On Monday, October 9, Linda Snyder reported a third adult with female markings.

PRAIRIE CHICKENS NEED TEXANS!!!

The following letter is printed by the request of our president, F. Richard Miller, who says, "I sincerely hope that Texans will outdo the generosity of our out-of-state friends so that, through your organization (Texas Wildlife, an affiliate of World Wildlife Fund) another piece of natural Texas can be preserved for future generations." (parenthesis inserted by co-ed.)

Dear Mr. Miller:

In the interest of saving time and travel, we moved the Texas Wildlife Office to Austin about the middle of July. We are still plugging away at trying to raise money to finish paying for the Prairie Chicken Refuge Lands.

At the present time we still owe \$123,000.00 and this is counting \$45,000.00 of out-of-state pledges that are to come to us if we raise the remainder of the money this year and, frankly, we are behind schedule and working hard to make a better showing this fall.

Sincerely,

HOWARD DODGEN
Executive Director
Texas Wildlife

RARE BIRD DISCOVERED IN TEXAS (©1967 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission).

WASHINGTON - Ivory-billed Woodpeckers, spectacular red, white and black birds of the southern swamplands that ornithologists long feared extinct, have been found in Texas.

Three pairs of the 20-inch birds- as big as crows- have been sighted in the Neches River Valley in the Big Thicket country of Eastern Texas by John V. Dennis of Leesburg, Va., an expert on woodpeckers. Dennis, who searched for the woodpeckers under a contract with the Interior Department, estimated on the basis of his study and reports from amateurs that there are 5 to 10 pairs of the birds in the Big Thicket.

The last previous confirmed sighting of an Ivory-bill, America's largest woodpecker, was of one bird on the Chipola River in Florida in 1950.

Since then there have been occasional reports of Ivory-bills, but ornithologists have dismissed the sightings as misidentifications of Pileated Woodpeckers, somewhat similar birds quite common in the woodlands.

Now, Dennis said, the reports of the amateur birdwatchers cannot be so easily brushed aside. And Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall said reports of Ivory-bill survival will be investigated along the Congaree River in South Carolina, along the Apalachicola River in Florida, along the Tombigbee River in Alabama and Mississippi and along the Altamaha River in Georgia.

Dennis saw his first Ivory-bill in the Big Thicket early last December, about a week after his field study began. He was alone, walking through a cypress swamp, when he spotted the bird on a tree only 50 or 60 feet away.

"He was extremely wary and flew away," Dennis said, "but I waded in the water after him and later picked him up again."

Dennis was carrying his seven-power binoculars so he had no difficulty in identifying the bird with shiny black and white plumage and long ivory bill. The male bird wears a brilliant scarlet crest.

One of Dennis's findings raised hope that the Ivory-bill will survive. Ornithologists have long attributed their decline to the disappearance of hardwood forests, where the Ivory-bill fed on the larva of wood-boring beetles.

Dennis discovered that the Ivory-bill also fed on insects in pine slashings, indicating that that the bird might be adapting to changed environment.

BIRDS STILL ONE JUMP AHEAD (From the column, "Texas Notebook" by Louis Hofferbert. Reprinted by permission of The Houston Chronicle)

Since it became known that the very rare Ivory-billed Woodpecker has been found for sure in East Texas quite a few comments have come in about it. Mostly they are in one of these groups:

Those who say "shucks, I knew it all the time."

Those who say "why, I have seen those birds all my life but never knew what they were."

Those who say "well, what do we do now?"

The first two are interesting, naturally. But the last one is a whizzer, and I only wish I knew the answer.

Several people have asked if I think there is a chance the government will set up a special refuge for the Ivory-bills. Something like the one for the Whooping Cranes.

Strictly as a guess, I would say that is not likely. Such a refuge, many thousand acres of

BIRDS STILL ONE JUMP AHEAD (con't from p.2)

valuable timber land, would be expensive out of this world. On top of that, there is no guarantee the woodpeckers would stay in a refuge if they had one.

They might, of course. Especially if the right food supply was kept up. But nobody knows enough about the big woodpeckers to be certain about anything. And you can see how it might get embarrassing if millions were spent on a refuge, only to find the woodpeckers went thataway.

On the other hand, the fact that Ivory-bills have managed to stay one jump ahead of extinction tells us something, too. For one thing, it tells us that six miles of virgin timber is not really necessary for every pair, as was commonly believed.

Also, despite fears of some folks, I doubt there is much danger of big landowners ripping and slashing through the woods to ruin any possible woodpecker sanctuary. They would have to rip through a couple hundred miles of river bottom to be sure they covered the right places, and I have a feeling this would get sort of tedious after a while.

The fact is, some pretty effective steps have been taken already, though this is not generally known.

Way back last winter, when the Ivory-bills were first found, some timber cutting was about to start right where it might have endangered the newly-discovered birds.

So Houston's Congressman Bob Eckhardt got on the telephone and talked to everybody who had anything to do with the timber. It was not in his district, you understand, but Bob is one of the most conservation-minded men in Congress and he wanted to help.

Anyway, he got on the phone and convinced everybody it would be a lot better to leave the timber than lose the woodpeckers. And he got firm promises the trees would not be cut.

That is good news for the woodpeckers, of course. And it proves it helps to have a congressman on your side.

CLEARING HOUSE, September, 1967

Pied-billed Grebe: (1)2,26 (4)18,21 Cove AKM.
 White Pelican: (9)15 (70)21 Cove AKM; (50)30 Bolivar Peninsula NO DH.
 BROWN PELICAN: (1)8 Galveston Island NO JD. (see notes)
 Anhinga: (2)2 (50)29 Cove AKM; (1)11,10102 Holly Springs JR. (see notes)
 Great Blue Heron: (10)30 Bolivar Peninsula NO DH.
 Green Heron: (2)2 Cove AKM.
 Reddish Egret: (1)3rd week, Cove, S. L. Griffith reported by AKM.
 American Bittern: (6)30 Anahuac Refuge NO DH.
 Wood Stork: (1)4 (30)5 Cove AKM; (150)30 Baytown JT GT; (30)18 Cove AKM.
 White-face Ibis: 11 days, (50)7 (35)9 (25)26 Cove AKM.
 White Ibis: (5-15)5 days Cove AKM.
 Roseate Spoonbill: (1)4,18,20 (20)5 (4)26 Cove AKM; (10)30 Bolivar Peninsula NO DH.
 Canada Goose: (1, Lesser)21 Cove AKM. (Probably a migrant AKM.)
 White-fronted Goose: (1)21 Cove AKM. (Probably a migrant AKM.)
 Snow Goose: (1)26 Cove AKM. (Probably a migrant AKM.)
 Blue Goose and Snow Gnow Goose: (4000)30 Anahuac Refuge NO DH
 Fulvous Tree Duck: (30)30 Anahuac Refuge NO DH.
 Mottled Duck: (1-11)6 days (150)20 (200)21 Cove AKM; (30)30 Anahuac Refuge NO DH.
 Pintail: (1)18 (500)20 (200)21,26 Cove AKM; (200)30 Anahuac Refuge NO DH.
 Green-winged Teal: (1)18 (100)20 (300)21 (100)26 Cove AKM; (60)30 Anahuac Refuge NO DH.
 Blue-winged Teal: (30-40)18,20,21,26 Cove AKM; (500)30 Anahuac Refuge NO DH.
 American Widgeon: (5)21 (40)26 Cove AKM; (10)30 Anahuac Refuge NO DH.
 Shoveller: (20)21 (10)26 Cove AKM; (4)30 Anahuac Refuge NO DH.
 Ruddy Duck: (4)30 Anahuac Refuge NO DH.
 MASKED DUCK: See story on page 1.
 Black Vulture: (6)1 Cove AKM.
 Mississippi Kite: (2)7 (2)11 (1)16, 10102 Holly Springs JR. (All adults flying low; seen well. JR);
 (1)3, 11926 Broken Bough RBM; (4)13, 11002 Landon Lane BH JH.
 Sharp-shinned Hawk: (1)4 (1)8 10102 Holly Springs JR.
 Red-shouldered Hawk: (1)8 weeks thru 9/25 420 Mulberry Lane, Bellaire DM JS (See notes).
 Broad-winged Hawk: (1)3 Cove AKM; (509)11 (110)14 (525)16 (8600)25 (21)29, 10102 Holly Springs JR;
 (see notes JR); (150)16, 11926 Broken Bough RBM; (ne)16 (40-50)17, 11002 Landon BH, JH.
 Marsh Hawk: (1)23 Texas City JT GT.
 Osprey: (1)21 Cove AKM.
 Peregrine Falcon: (1)25 10102 Holly Springs JR. **Pigeon Hawk: (1)5 Anahuac AKM.
 Sparrow Hawk: (1)4,8,9,18,21 (6)26 (1-3) since 26th, Cove AKM; (1)23 Galveston NO DH.
 Greater Prairie Chicken: (6)18 or 19, S of Tex City Flood Dike on SH 146, MW.
 Bobwhite: (9)9 Mason Park Southeast Houston, NP.
 American Coot: (10)2 Cove AKM.
 Semipalmated Plover: (20)23 Galveston NO DH.
 Piping Plover: (10)23 Galveston NO DH.
 Snowy Plover: (4)23 Galveston NO DH; (2)23 Galveston JT GT.
 Black-bellied Plover: (5)21 Cove AKM; (10)23 Galveston NO DH.
 Ruddy Turnstone: (2)21 Cove AKM; (200)30 Galveston JT GT.
 Upland Plover: (1)21 Cove AKM; (2)23 Galveston NO DH.
 Spotted Sandpiper: (1)21 Cove AKM.
 Willet: (1)21 Cove AKM.

Knots: (35)23 Galveston NO DH; (20)23 (75)30 Galveston JT GT.
 Pectoral Sandpiper: (20)2 (8)20 (30)21 Cove AKM.
 Dowitcher (sp): (3)21 (20)26 Cove AKM.
 Stilt Sandpiper: (15)21 (3)26 Cove AKM.
 Buff-breasted Sandpiper: (1)10 Freeport NS JS.
 Marbled Godwit: (6)23 Galv JT GT.
 American Avocet: (7)21 Cove AKM.
 Black-necked Stilt: (1)21 Cove AKM.
 Wilson's Phalarope: (1)10 Baytown Tunnel RBM; (5)10 Freeport NS JS.
 Common Tern: (30)30 Galv JT GT;
 Sandwich Tern: (10)23 (40)30 Galv JT GT.
 Black Skimmer: (11)21 Cove AKM.
 Black-billed Cuckoo: (1)29 Cove AKM.
 Screech Owl: (1)10,26 Cove AKM.
 Great Horned Owl: (1-2)18 days Cove AKM.
 Barred Owl: (1)13 Cove AKM.
 Chuck-Will's-Widow: (2)11 Cove AKM; (1)3, 10102 Holly Springs JR; (4)3 Bayou Woods LH HH.
 Ruby-throated Hummingbird: (1-2)14 days Cove AKM.
 Belted Kingfisher: (1)26 Cove AKM.
 Yellow-shafted Flicker: (1)28,29,30.Cove AKM; (1)2, (3 males, 3 females) Mason Park, NP
 Red-headed Woodpecker: (1)2 Cove AKM.
 Eastern Kingbird: (30)1 (2)5 (4)10 (3)21 (1)12,26 Cove AKM; (1)3 Fondren Woods LH HH.
 TROPICAL KINGBIRD: (1)26 Galv NO JD EC (see notes.)
 Great-crested Flycatcher: (4)3 Fondren Woods LH HH.
 Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: (1)3 Fondren Woods LH HH.
 Empidonax Flycatcher: (1)1, 2,9,20 Cove AKM; (5)30 Galv JT GT; (2)3 Fondren Woods LH HH.
 Eastern Wood Pewee: (1)10,18,21 Cove AKM; (2)3 Fondren Woods LH HH.
 Olive-sided Flycatcher: (1)30 Galv JT GT.
 Vermilion Flycatcher: (1)28 Cove AKM.
 Barn Swallow: (12)3 Bayou Woods LH HH.
 Purple Martin: (1)2 Glenbrook Park Southeast Houston NP.
 Catbird: (1)30 Galv NO DH.
 Brown Thrasher: From the 23rd Cove AKM; (10)30 Galv NO DH.
 Robin: (2)30 Galv NO DH; (3)2 (6)13 (1)30 Glenbrook Park Southeast Houston NP.
 Swainson's Thrush: (1)30 Galv NO DH.
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: (4)30 Galv NO DH; (5)3 Fondren Woods LH HH.
 Black-and-white Warbler: (2)12 Cove AKM; (1)30 Galv NO DH.
 Tennessee Warbler: (1)10 11926 Broken Bough MAM.
 Nashville Warbler: (1)14 , 11926 Broken Bough MAM; (1)24, 3707 Reveille HW EW. (see notes HW EW).
 Yellow Warblers: (1)12 Cove AKM.
 Magnolia Warbler: (2)30 Galveston NO DH.
 Kentucky Warbler: (1)30 Galv NO DH.
 Yellowthroat: (2)30 Galv NO DH.
 Yellow-breasted Chat: (1)3 Fondren Woods LH HH.
 Wilson's Warbler: (1)1 (5)12 Cove AKM; (2)3 Fondren Woods LH HH; (1)14, 11926 Broken Bough MAM.
 Canada Warblers: (2)3 Fondren Woods LH HH.
 American Redstart: (1)10 Cove AKM.
 YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD: (1)23 Galv NO DH (see notes).
 Baltimore Oriole: (1)12 Freeport NS JS.
 Blue Grosbeak: (1)22 Cove AKM; (1)3 Fondren Woods LH HH.
 Indigo Buntings: (1)3 Fondren Woods LH HH.
 Seaside Sparrow: (1)20,21 Cove AKM.

Omitted in error: Eared Grebe: (1)10 Freeport Surf NS JS.

Clearing House Notes:

The Cove Area:

There were very few blue-winged and many green-winged teal in the teal shooting season. There were far more pintails than usual so early. Large ducks were more common than teal and were not at all safe from duck hunters.

The United States Corps of Engineers bought my place September 9. I plan to move October 16 a few hundred feet south. This plac including six other homes, said to have been bought (forced sales) for a park on the proposed Lake Wallisville. The lowest marsh area will have three feet of water when full to overflowing. The average will be less than 18 inches of water over several thousand acres of flooded marsh. There will be three parks, which ought to provide good birding; but nature-wise will be harmful, since estuarine habitats will be replaced by freshwater. (The USCE paid around \$ 800 per acre for land that on the open market is selling for \$1500 to \$2500. Paraphrased by Co-editors Pro-tem.) AKM.

Tropical Kingbird:

We watched this Kingbird for about 20 minutes as it continued its flights after food (TROPICAL KINGBIRD), and returned each time to its perch on a fence wire about 30 feet from our car. The notch in the brown tail could be seen as it perched on the fence and also as it flew in pursuit. The belly and breast were bright yellow (no gray on the breast as in the Western Kingbird.). NO, JB, EC.

Clearing House Notes (con't from p.4)Brown Pelican:

13 Mile Road, seen flying back and forth along the shore line, sometimes as close as 300 feet. NO and JB.

Yellow-headed Blackbird:

This was a male and was seen at close range feeding in the grass near the first pond on Stewart Road (just beyond the first golf course.) NO and DH.

Anhinga:

The Anhinga was seen in a group of 14 Broad-winged Hawks circling just above the tree-tops. That group stayed directly overhead for several minutes, so there was no question of identification. JR.

Broad-winged Hawks:

I saw more hawks than I have seen before, and they came in good numbers earlier in the month than they have since I have been watching for them. I saw quite a few hawks other than Broad-wings all during the month, one to three at a time, that I was unable to identify because of height. The Broad-wings I have reported were seen either in the late afternoon coming in to roost or in the morning between 9 and 10 circling low before taking off. The 8600 that I saw on the 25th were flying high in very large groups between 1 and 1:45 PM. When I went out at 1, they were already stretched all across the sky, so I have no idea how many there actually were. I was unable to spot anything in this group that I could be sure was not a Broad-wing. JR.

Red-shouldered Hawk:

I wish to report a Red-shouldered Hawk with the uncommon habit of staying in amongst the trees around my garden in Bellaire. Its behaviour is unusual also, in often perching low on the tree limbs. The head has a deceptively light coloration almost like an eye stripe. It has been in the vicinity for 8 weeks. Jerry Strickling has observed it with me and agrees on its identity. DM.

Nashville Warbler:

This bird, seen at 4 PM, had yellow beneath its gray head. Its back was olive. He stayed near the crysanthemums and caught caterpillars beneath the leaves of these flowers. HW, EW.

Clearing House Contributors:

AKM Arlie K. McKay	JR Jane Robinson	BH Bill Harwell
NO Norma Oates	NP Noel Pettingell	JH Jean Harwell
JB Jerri Baker	LH Louise Hoffman	NS Nancy Strickling
EC Etta Coffman	HH Henry Hoffman	JS Jerry Strickling
DH Dirk Hagemeyer	RBM Robert B. Moore	DM David Marrack
JT John Tveten	MAM Mary Ann Moore	HW Helen Wolfer
GT Gloria Tveten	MW Marian Washburn	EW Ella Wolfer

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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION and CHANGES of ADDRESS:

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Oct 67

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