



# THE SPOONBILL

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GOOD BIRDING, EVERYONE!!!!

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

## GIFT IN ARMAND'S MEMORY

by Bessie G. Cornelius

In the February issue I told about finding a number of rare early editions of "Bird Lore", starting with Number 1, Volume I, dated 1899, and proceeding through the year 1913, and that shortly before his death Armand Yramategui had expressed a desire to have these volumes for the Museum of Natural Science in Houston. Armand's wish has now become a reality, I am happy to announce! Mr. and Mrs. Cleve Bachman of Beaumont, who knew and esteemed Armand's work, have purchased these costly volumes and are presenting them to the Museum in honor and memory of Armand. Mr. Bachman is an outstanding attorney in Beaumont and Mrs. Bachman is a well-known conservationist throughout the State and among other offices, is past secretary of TOS, on the Board of Directors of Texas Nature Conservancy and on the Board of Beautify Texas. She has worked with Armand on numerous occasions on conservation matters. These volumes will constitute a worthy asset to the Museum's library and this generous gift is certainly a noble gesture on the part of Mr. and Mrs. Bachman.

## GOOD NEWS!!!

by Joe M. Heiser, Jr.

On a quick check-up yesterday, March 27, Joe Farrell and I repeated our discovery of early Spring, 1969- a Black Vulture nesting in the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary. Madams "V" left her two handsomely marked eggs uncovered and rested on a branch nearby for the second or two it took for us to make the observation and move quickly and quietly from the area.

Last years' nesting was a complete success, with two well-feathered chicks ready to leave the nest soon after our final look-in.

A Red-shouldered Hawk nest in a tree top near "the Swamp" produced at least two young graduates, as viewed with field glasses. This year we have seen no signs of life around the hawk nest, which nevertheless appears to have been enlarged.

My records show that in several years of the early 1950's at least two families of Brown-headed and one of White-breasted Nuthatches were raised within Little Thicket Boundaries. In repeated searches, Farrell and I found only one family of Brown-heads last year. So far this year, neither sight nor sound of Nuthatches recorded on several careful quests.

Have others noted the apparent decrease in abundance of the Carolina Wren? And of the box turtle, the cottontail rabbit, the horned lizard, and snakes and reptiles in general?

Disturbing thought: Of what use are organizations (under any name), bigger "big days" afield, and fatter books listing bird counters, without relevant statistics, broad planning, and effective action to meet emergencies which are the special responsibilities of ornithological people, both professional and amateur especially on the local level.

## BELLAIRE HIGHLIGHTS

by Dave Marrack

My daughter and I were startled by the call of a Chuch-Wills-Widow at sundown on the 22nd of March. Clearly spring was with us. I regard it and the swifts as the real harbinger of spring on the Gulf Coast. Martins and Swallows seem to come almost too early when harsh weather may still occur.

Mary and I had a wonderful view of our bird on the back gate post. We crawled to within 12 feet of it. I had not previously appreciated the series of short grunt-

cluck noises it can make, apart from it's exciting call. Our first Swifts were seen 31st of March.

At 5:15 April 2nd I counted 95 Broadwinged Hawks and 1 NightHawk over Herman Park wheeling in the turbulence of a new Pacific front coming by. I saw two roosting in our Hackberry that evening and another with several Turkey Vultures over Middle Bayou during the canoe trip 5th April and also a Palm Warbler. A Chuch-Wills-Widow was in the garden 6th April.

Looking back over the winter the highlight was 8 eagles-4 Bald and 2 Golden (1U.ID.) at Warner Ranch Lake in January in one look!. In Bellaire for the first time 16 (usually) Cattle Egrets hunted in the grass on the S.W. corner of the intersection of 610 and Bellaire Blvd. through most of January and February. I saw others on Evergreen and once in the garden. Starlings and Robins have been more numerous at the feeder and lawn than for the past 3 years and Waxwings were plentiful but Goldfinches and Siskin seem to have been scarce. A Black-Crowned Night Heron has spent its days in the tree of a neighbor up the road.

My wild Screech Owl has been a less frequent caller for mice this year but will still take them from my hand when "he" comes and it is still a thrill.

PROBLEMS OF THE WHITE-WINGED DOVE (part 2) by Hank Robison

Because of the great shortage of native brushland that is suitable nesting habitat, the White-winged Dove started using the orange and grapefruit groves of the Rio Grande Valley.

About one-half of the Whitewing nesting occurs in citrus. (A rough estimate over the past 15 years). In 1969 brush made up 39% of the nesting habitat and it supported 53% of the nesting birds.

Evidently citrus groves are second choice of the Whitewing because it has a population density of 11.5 birds per acre, as compared to 20.5 birds per acre in the wooded brushland. However they are forced to use the citrus for nesting habitat.

This is a big hazard, as the value of citrus groves to nesting Whitewings is reduced to almost zero when a hard freeze forces the grove owners to prune back their trees, and replant their groves.

On February 1, 1951, a freeze destroyed 85% of the citrus trees the Whitewing used, and the following summer, the breeding population dropped to 110,000 birds.

In January of 1962, 61% of the citrus was destroyed, and as a result the broodstock of Whitewings dropped seriously low again.

Bandings and recovery of Valley Whitewings (1940-1964) indicates that the bird has a mortality rate of 48%. This means that each adult nesting pair must produce 1.84 young to maintain a stable population. On a 1:1 production rate it is evident that the mortality rate is about as high as the Whitewing can tolerate, without a serious reduction in the broodstock.

The White-winged Dove is an international GAME bird. Hundreds of thousands are killed by U.S. hunters every year. Consider that the hunting season is in the fall, and the nesting season is in the spring. A successful fall hunt (200,000 to 300,000) is followed by a bad freeze with the loss of citrus for nesting habitat.

If we start out with 600,000 Whitewings in the fall and the hunt kills 250,000 birds, we still have 350,000 left. Suppose this winter we have a hard freeze and lose the citrus for nesting. Only half the birds raise families, and we end up with only 175,000 Whitewings.

This is especially dangerous when you consider it will take a few years for the citrus groves to make a comeback. Then too, if we get a second hard freeze a year or two later before the groves have recovered, it could mean complete disaster.

In addition to the purchase of 164 acres recently by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the World Wildlife Fund has made purchases of land suitable for White-winged Dove habitat, as this bird was the primary purpose of their land purchase project.

Unfortunately, land clearing is going on faster than purchases are being made. It is being cleared for farming, real estate developments, and of course for new citrus groves.

In towns the older trees are dying out, and others are cut to make room for buildings, and parking lots. Highways and free-ways are taking their toll.

It is true that land suitable for Whitewing refuges is scarce and expensive. But once purchased, it will always be with us.

Before the White-wing Doves are lost to us forever, before it is too late, write your State Representatives, and State Senators and urge them to help the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department purchase more nesting refuges for the Whitewings.

Also, it might help to write: Pierce Johnson, Chairman of Commission, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, John H. Reagan Building, Austin, Texas 78701.

CLEARING HOUSE, MARCH 1970

- Loon, Common: (2)24, Barbour's Cut, N.B.; (8)15, Texas City Dike, VLE.  
Grebe, Eared: (16)5, (180+)14, Cove, AKM; (46)15, Texas City Dike, VLE.  
Pied-billed: (1 to 5)2 days, (7)6,9,14, Cove, AKM.  
Pelican, White: (15-200)6 days, Cove, AKM.  
GANNET: (1)21, W. Galveston I. (feeding in Gulf), FC, VE, DS, AS.  
Cormorant, Double-crested: (NC)8 days, (65)14, Cove, AKM.  
Olivaceous: (50)5, (75)14, Cove, AKM.  
Egret, Cattle: (1-3)5, 11, 29, 31, Cove, AKM.  
Nightheron, Black-crowned: (35)5, (86+)14, Cove, AKM.  
Ibis, White-faced: (1-20)5 days, Cove, AKM.  
Spoonbill, Roseate: (1)9, (9)14, (13)19, Cove, AKM.  
Goose, White-fronted: (1)7, (7)21, Cove, AKM.  
Snow and Blue: (2,000-5,000 or less)9 days to 18th, Cove, AKM; (1000+)8, So. of Katy, J&BH.  
Ducks, Mallard: (25-30)7,9, Cove, AKM.  
Mottled: (2-10)9 days, (25-38)7,9, Cove, AKM.  
Pintail: (NC)7 days, (200)9, Cove, AKM.  
Teal, Green-winged: (NC)7 days, (200)9, Cove, AKM.  
Blue-winged: (2-25)8 days, Cove, AKM.  
Widgeon, American: (NC)8 days, (8)21, Cove, AKM.  
Shoveler: (NC)8 days, (500)9, Cove, AKM.  
Wood: (5)14, Buckhorn Lake, J&BH. (4 males, 1 female)  
Canvasback: (10-13)5,9,14, Cove, AKM.  
Scaup, Lesser: (130)5, (NC)6 more days, Cove, AKM; (60)15, Texas City Dike, VLE.  
Goldeneye: (6)5, (3)14, Cove, AKM.  
Bufflehead: (1)14, Cove, AKM; (3)15, Texas City Dike, VLE.  
Ruddy: (100)11, Cove, AKM.  
Merganser, Hooded: (2)14, (1 male, 1 female) Deussen Park, J&BH.  
Red-breasted: (10)14, Cove, AKM; (1)22, Trinity Bay, (2)22 Scott's Bay, NB.  
Vulture, Turkey: (7)5, (1+4)5 days, Cove, AKM.  
Black: (38)5, (1)9, Cove, AKM.  
Kite, Swallow-tailed: (2)13, SB Chambers Co. (F.M 1985 Near old entrance to Anahuac Refuge) Mr. & Mrs. R.C.; (1)20, Hempstead Highway near Hot Wells, FC.  
Hawk, Red-tailed: (38)5, (8)11, (49)14, (1-4)14 more days, Cove, AKM.  
Rough-legged: (1)21, Galveston, VLE, AS, DS; (1)29, near NASA, VLE.  
Marsh: (4)5, (8)11, (14)14, (1-3)13 more days, Cove, AKM.  
Falcon, Peregrine: (1)16, Anahuac Refuge, RC.  
Hawk, Sparrow: (9)5, (9)11, (15)14, Cove, AKM.  
Crane, Sandhill: (150)8, South of Katy, J&BH.  
RAIL, YELLOW: (2)20, Anahuac Refuge, FA, WL, WGR; (3)22, Anahuac Refuge, LC, NP, AS.  
BLACK: (1)20, Anahuac Refuge, FA, WL, WGR;  
Coot, American: (42-71)7 days, (3)16, Cove, AKM.  
Plover, Piping: (6)29, Galveston, VLE; (4)15, Plowed field near LaMarque, VLE.  
Wilson's: (1)25, Galveston, FC.  
Golden, American: (1-2)3 days, (30)21, Cove, AKM; (1)16, Anahuac Refuge, RC;  
(NC)15, plowed field near LaMarque, (85)29, Galveston, VLE.  
Black-bellied: (1)21, (1)9, 25; (2)24, Cove, AKM.  
Turnstone, Ruddy: (4)29, Galveston, VLE.  
Snipe, Common: (2)29, Galveston, VLE.  
Curlew, Long-billed: (11)5, Cove, AKM; (45)29, Galveston, VLE.  
Plover, Upland: (1)24, (9)28, Cove, AKM; (16)29, Galveston, VLE.  
Sandpiper, Spotted: (1)11, 14, Cove, AKM.  
Willet: (4)21, Cove, AKM; (70)29, Galveston, VLE.  
Yellowlegs, Greater: (1-4)5 days, Cove, AKM.

- Yellowlegs, Lesser: (1-40)10 days, (250)24, Cove, AKM.  
Knot: (65)29, Galveston, VLE.  
Sandpiper, Pectoral: (50)24, Cove, AKM.  
Least: (NC)5,6,7,14, Cove, AKM.  
Dunlin: (NC)24, Cove, AKM.  
Dowitcher Sp.: (1-35)3 days, (100-600)5 days, Cove, AKM; (4)29, Galveston, VLE.  
Sandpiper, Stilt: (1)22, Anahuac Refuge, Shoveler Pond, AS.  
Sanderling: (4)11, Cove, AKM.  
Avocet, American: (8)14, Cove, AKM; (600)13, Anahuac Refuge, East Bay, RC.  
PHALAROPE, WILSON'S: (2)16, Anahuac Refuge, WK.  
GULL, LESSER BLACK-BACKED: (1)15 Texas City Dike, VLE; (1)21, Texas City Dike, FC, VLE,  
DS, AS.  
Gull, Bonaparte's: (3+1)11, (11)14, (4)21, Cove, AKM.  
Tern, Least: (1)25, Galveston, FC; (1)29, Galveston, VLE.  
DOVE, WHITE-WINGED: (8-10)27, County Courthouse, Galveston, HP.  
Dove, Inca: (1)8, Baytown, NB.  
Owl, Great Horned: (1)9, Cove, AKM.  
Owl, Burrowing: (1)22, Chambers County, F.M. 1985, 3 mi. east of Anahuac Refuge Entrance.  
JPB.  
Nighthawk, Common: (1)4, Baytown, NB.  
Swift, Chimney: (2)30, Baytown, NB.  
Hummingbird, Ruby-throated: (1)26,30,31, Cove, AKM; (2)26, (1)27, (1)30, Baytown, NB;  
(1)25, Galveston, FC.  
Kingfisher, Belted: (1)24, Cove, AKM.  
Flicker, Yellow-shafted: (1-2)9 days to 18th, Cove, AKM.  
Woodpecker, Pileated: (1)10, Cove, AKM; (2)14, Deussen Park, J&BH.  
Red-headed: (1)15, Kempner Park, Galveston, VLE; (1)18 thru 31st, Baytown, D&DL  
Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied: (1)14, Cove, AKM.  
Kingbird, Eastern: (1)29, Galveston, VLE.  
Flycatcher, Scissor-tailed: (1)31, Cove, AKM; (1)29, Baytown, NB; (6)29, Galveston, VLE.  
Phoebe, Eastern: (1)5, (2)9, Cove, AKM.  
Flycatcher, Empid. Sp.: (1)26, Baytown, NB.  
Wood Pewee, Eastern: (1)26, Baytown, NB.  
Swallow, Tree: (1-3)7,15,16,19, (20-25)14,21, Cove, AKM; (3)26, Baytown, NB.  
Rough-winged: (1)21,30,31, Cove, AKM.  
Barn: (1)24, (2)31, Cove, AKM.  
Martin, Purple: (1)23, Evergreen and Lawndale, Houston, RLM.  
Chickadee, Carolinas: (1)11, Cove, AKM.  
Titmouse, Tufted: (2)5, Cove, AKM.  
Nuthatch, Red-breasted: (1)17, Sheldon area, VLE.  
Wren, Short-billed Marsh: (1)9, Cove, AKM.  
Robins (NC)15 days, (180)14, Cove, AKM.  
Thrush, Hermit: (3)9, Cove, AKM.  
Bluebird, Eastern: (1)6, Cove, AKM.  
Gnatchatcher, Blue-gray: (3)30, Hogg Bird Sanctuary, Houston, VLE; (1)14, Cove, AKM.  
Kinglet, Golden-crowned: (2)5, (1)9, Cove, AKM; (1)15, Spring Creek Park, J&BH.  
Pipit, Water: (75)5, (1)24, Cove, AKM.  
Waxwing, Cedar: (15)5, (10)6, Cove, AKM; (10)30, Hogg Bird Sanctuary, VLE.  
Vireo, White-eyed: (1)26, Baytown, NB; (1)14, Deussen Park, J&BH; (2)29, Galveston, (1)30,  
Hogg Bird Sanctuary, (1)17, Sheldon, VLE.  
Vireo, Red-eyed: (1)29, Galveston, VLE.  
Warbler, Black and White: (1)24,31, Baytown, NB; (2)29, Galveston, VLE; (1)22,30,31,  
Baytown, D&DL.  
Orange-crowned: (1)1,5,14,25, (2)9,21, Cove, AKM.  
Parula: (1)26, Baytown, NB; (1)15, Galveston, (1)28, Hogg Bird Sanctuary, (1)29,  
Galveston, VLE.  
Myrtle: (NC)12 days, (20-25)4,19, Cove, AKM; (3)30, Hogg Bird Sanctuary, VLE.  
Yellow-throated: (1)21, Cove, AKM; (1)17, Sheldon, VLE; (1)2 Baytown, D&DL.  
Pine: (2)14, Deussen Park, J&BH.  
Palm: (1)14,21, Cove, AKM.  
Hooded: (1)26, Baytown, NB, (1)29, Galveston, VLE.  
Oriole, Orchard: (1)30, Hogg Bird Sanctuary, VLE.  
Blackbird, Brewer's: (5)29, Galveston, VLE.  
Dickcissel: (1)14, Cove, AKM.  
Siskin, Pine: (15)28, Hogg Bird Sanctuary, VLE.  
Goldfinch, American: (4)17, Sheldon, (6, male in summer plumage)30, Hogg Bird Sanctuary, VLE.  
Sparrow, Sharp-tailed: (2)9, Cove, AKM; (3)15, South Jetty, Galveston, VLE.  
Sparrow, Vesper: (3)11, (2)21, Cove, AKM; (1)29, Galveston, VLE.  
Lark: (1)22, Cove, AKM.  
Junco, Slate-colored: (3)17, Sheldon, VLE.  
Sparrow, Chipping: (12)14, Deussen Park, J&BH; (15)17, Sheldon, VLE.

Sparrow, White-crowned: (5+)14, Cove, AKM.  
Lincoln's: (1)21, Cove, AKM; (2)14, Sheldon, J&BH.  
Song: (2)9, Cove, AKM.

CLEARING HOUSE CONTRIBUTORS

AKM Arlie K. McKay  
NB Nettie Busby  
J&BH Jean and Bill Harwell  
FC Fred Collins  
VLE Victor L. Emanuel  
D&DL Dorothy and David Lefkovits  
FA Fred Abshier  
JPB Jack P. Barrett (T.O.S., Ponca City, Oklahoma)  
LC Lee Carrington  
RC Russel Clapper  
WK W. Klabunde (Lewiston, N. Y.)  
WL William Lewis  
RIM Robert L. Mills  
NP Noel Pettingell  
WGR William G. Reese (Pacific Grove, Calif.)  
AS Arnold Small (Los Angeles, Calif.)  
DS Dennis Shepler  
HP Harvey Patten

CLEARING HOUSE NOTES

Yellow Rails were seen and captured on both morning and afternoon marsh excursions on March 22 (AS and LC in morning, NP and LC in afternoon). Houston Chronicle of April 1 (News-Life Section) contains details of March 20 "Marshland Wagon Ride" as well as other descriptions and photographs of the Anahuac Refuge and its natural attractions, including a photo of the American Bittern by Dirk Hagemeyer.

Noel Pettingell

After returning to California and having added four North American "lifers" in Texas, Arnold Small wrote me as follows concerning the Texas City dike gull: "Vic showed me the gull which I have no doubt is the race of the Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus fuscus*)".

Noel Pettingell

Miss Rose Ann Rowlett, a student at Hayward College in California, writes that Dr. Harold G. Cogswell, author of the two-volume work, Birds of California, stated when asked about the Texas City gull "Western Gull adults never get streaked heads in winter." Dr. Cogswell is an authority on gulls and is currently engaged on a major research project on gulls in the San Francisco area.

On March 21, 1970, I showed THE GULL to Mr. Arnold Small, former editor of the Southern California section of Audubon Field Notes, member of the "600" club, and vice-president of the American Birding Association. Mr. Small is very familiar with the Western and The Lesser Black-backed Gulls. He stated that it was his opinion that the Texas City bird was definitely not a Western Gull because of the streaks on the head. The bird was too small to be a Western, it's bill was too small and the mantle was too dark. He believes the bird is a Lesser Black-backed Gull and accordingly added it to his A. O. U. checklist area life list as bird number 635. He added the Yellow Rail the following day.

Victor L. Emanuel

COMING EVENTS

- Tuesday, May 12 Regular O. N. C. meeting. Robert A. Vines will present the program on "Poisonous and Edible Plants."
- Saturday, May 16 O. N. C. field trip, "East Texas Tree Carvings," led by Luther Powell. See Nature Club Notes for details.
- Saturday, June 6 Since the picnic at Gladys Galbraith's farm was such a big success last year, another is in the planning stage for this summer. Details will be announced later, but set aside this date for good birding and good fellowship.

NATURAL HISTORY STAMPS

A note of interest from Noel Pettingell announces a new issue of postage stamps, the six cent Natural History Series, which will be first placed on sale at New York, where the American Museum of Natural History is currently observing its centennial year, on May 6. Of special interest to birders is the fact that one of the stamps will picture the Bald Eagle.

CONSERVATIONIST SUCCESS

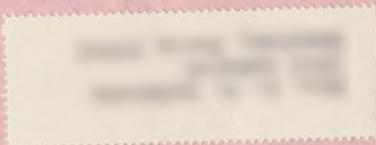
We're a little late in publishing this item, but in case some of our readers were not aware of it, the lawsuit filed by conservationist groups to prevent leasing of land in Meridian State Park for use as a golf course was decided in favor of the Golden-cheeked Warblers by Judge Herman Jones on February 9.

OFFICERS

Chairman:	Mr. Wallace C. Mebane, Jr., 7106 Mobud, Houston, Texas 77036
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POSTSCRIPT FROM THE EDITORS DESK:

We realize the Chairman had declared a moratorium on the subject of the Gull at the Texas City Dike but since we've had such renowned birders from out of this area we have taken the liberty of putting in their comments. Congratulations to Linda Snyder for her lonely stand in its' identification soon after it was first sighted.



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