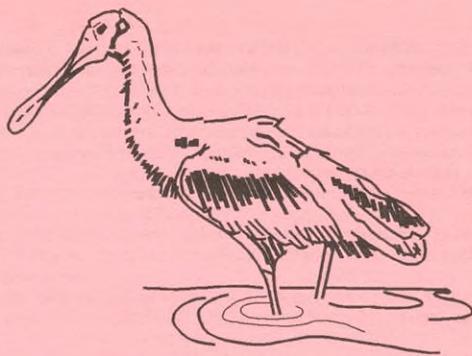


# The Spoonbill



Published by the Ornithology Group, Outdoor Nature Club Houston, Texas  
Judith Mueller Boyce, Editor; Don Richardson, Technical Consultant

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## COMING EVENTS

**Sunday, October 4:** OG PELAGIC TRIP OUT OF PORT ARANSAS. Trip leader is Mike Austin. To reserve your spot on this trip, call Dave Bradford at 713/855-2615. Lodging is still just \$35.00 a night at the Seaside Inn in Port Aransas, just five minutes from the dock. For more details refer to previous issues of The Spoonbill.

**Monday, October 5:** ORNITHOLOGY GROUP MEETING. 7:30 P.M. Harris County Bayland Community Center (north side of Bissonnet just west of Hillcroft). Greg Lasley will present a program about birding the llanos of Venezuela, one of the great physical features of South America. The llanos resemble more the plains of Africa than the jungles of Amazonia and are teeming with hundreds of bird species. Greg recently accompanied Roger Tory Peterson on a photographic expedition through this area, and he will provide us with some stunning looks at spectacular birds. Greg is actively involved in the documentation of rare birds in Texas, currently serving as Secretary of the Texas Bird Records Committee of the Texas Ornithological Society and as co-editor of the Texas Region for American Birds magazine. He has been birding in Texas for more than fifteen years and has authored over twenty published articles. Come visit with Greg and enjoy a fun and informative program. Join us at 7:00 P.M. for Learning Corner. Karen Beekman will discuss migrating hawks.

**Saturday, October 10:** OG FIELD TRIP TO BOLIVAR FLATS AND HIGH ISLAND to enjoy migrants. Meet our leader at 8:00 A.M. at Bolivar Flats. To reach the Flats take the Bolivar Ferry to Bolivar Peninsula. Turn right, toward the Gulf of Mexico on Loop 108, which is 3.7 miles from the ferry on Hwy. 87. Turn right again when you reach the beach. Follow the shoreline to the new Bolivar Flats sanctuary. Bring a sack lunch.

**Saturday, October 17:** OG FIELD TRIP TO MITCHELL LAKE IN SAN ANTONIO. We will meet our leader, Willie Sekulla, at the entrance gate to Mitchell Lake at 7:30 A.M. Numerous migrant shorebirds use the lake as a stopping place during migration. Red-necked Phalarope are often seen on the lake in October. To reach the entrance gate, take I-10 west from Houston to San Antonio's 410 Loop. Go south on the loop past 281 to Moursand Blvd. Exit Moursand and go south 0.4 miles to J&R Party House. Opposite the Party House, on the east side of Moursand Blvd., is the entrance gate. Willie is an excellent leader and in the past this trip has produced many "good" birds. Bring a sack lunch for a full day of birding. A reasonably-priced motel nearby is the Coachman Inn (512\337-7171). Contact David about carpooling or other concerns at 855-2615.

**Monday, November 2:** ORNITHOLOGY GROUP MEETING. 7:30 P.M. Harris County Bayland Community Center. OG member Jim Morgan will present a program about the various color morphs of Red-tailed Hawk, an abundant raptor on the UTC in winter. Currently a member of the Texas Bird Records Committee and a former member of the OG UTC Checklist Committee, Jim is also co-compiler of the renowned Freeport Christmas Bird Count. He has authored several articles for ornithological journals and, in 1984, he and other birding friends discovered and documented two new U.S. species, the Yucatan Vireo and the Greenish Elaenia. Both records were accepted by the A.O.U. and the A.B.A. Jim is an expert on both raptors and field identification so join us to learn more about this variable and beautiful bird.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### AND YARD REPORTS

.....MINUTES OF AUGUST 31, 1992 OG MEETING: For the Learning Corner, Winnie Burkett presented slides of fall warblers and shared her knowledge of how to identify them. Excellent!

David Bradford, Vice Chairman, opening the meeting at 7:30 P.M. by announcing that Bob Schwarz has assumed the responsibilities of Aluminum Chairman.

Frank Peace, Treasurer, reported an account balance of \$8,150.00 as of August 31, 1992.

Gretchen Mueller announced the September 19, 9:00 A.M. to Noon beach cleanup on Bolivar Flats. A field trip led by Bob Behrstock beginning at 7:30 A.M. will precede the cleanup.

Gail Luckner announced the hawk count at Smith Point will be from September 12 through October 16 [See details below in Newsbriefs.]

David Riskin of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department presented a program about management of Galveston Island State Park. The park consists of 1600 acres, with 1200 acres of marsh and coastal grasslands. The land was previously grazed by cattle, and David noted that grassland anywhere in the world, once disturbed, usually reverts to shrub land. The management objective is to restore the park to a representative grassland community by removal of shrubs and exotic plant species, controlled burning, selective mowing to control spread of Chinese Tallow trees and planting motts of native trees which act as neotropical migrant traps. **Christine Bourgeois, Secretary**

.....THE HOUSTON AUDUBON SOCIETY cordially invites you to attend the 1992 Egret Awards Dinner, "An Evening for the Birds." Thursday, October 22, 1992 at The Houstonian, 111 North Post Oak Lane. Wine and Silent Auction, 6:00 P.M. Dinner, 7:00 P.M. Followed by the Awards Presentation. Honored guests are Dr. Roger Tory Peterson, noted field guide author and illustrator, and Mr. Peter Berle, President, National Audubon Society. Please call Mary Bowen at the Houston Audubon Society (932-1639) to find out how you can support the work of the Houston Audubon Society by attending the dinner (\$50.00 per person) or by sponsoring a table and purchasing raffle tickets. Items to be raffled include a signed Roger Tory Peterson Peregrine Falcon print, a print entitled "Dawn of Antiquity" by Larry Dyke and an acrylic of a Scarlet Macaw by Wayne Smyth.

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.....CHRISTMAS IN MEXICO!!! And a one-week extension to Palenque. Once again the OG is going to Mexico for the holidays and will participate in Christmas Counts while there. Oscar Carmona has agreed to lead a group of OG members on a birding expedition into Mexico between Christmas and New Year's. This is an excellent opportunity to familiarize yourself with some Mexican birds that don't emigrate to Texas! There will be a one-week extension to Palenque. Call Bill Tarbox at 955-2368 with any questions. Space is limited. Contact David Bradford at 855-2615 as soon as possible so that necessary arrangements can be made.

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.....SMITH POINT HAWK COUNT 1992, co-compiled by Gail Luckner and Winnie Burkett, will be held at Abshier Wildlife Management Area on Smith Point from 8:00 A.M. until Noon DAILY September 12 through October 16. This time period represents peak fall raptor migration along the UTC, and Smith Point is a great place to view the birds as they head south. The data we collect will be submitted to the Hawk Migration Association of North America and Hawk Watch International, two organizations which focus on the study of raptor migration, population trends and conservation.

Observers at Hawk Count 1991 watched thousands of Broad-winged's, over 1500 accipiters and 24 Merlins, as well as wide assortment of other raptors, including two American Swallow-tailed Kites. See notices elsewhere in The Spoonbill for details about OG field trips associated with Hawk Count 1992. Maps of the area will be available at the August 31 OG meeting. Come out and join the fun and learn a bit about raptors, too. Questions? Call Gail Luckner, 328-6236.

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.....THE OG IS PLANNING A FIELD TRIP TO ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK, PALMEE NATIONAL GRASSLANDS AND THE DENVER AREA June 5-13, 1993. You can expect to see White-tailed Ptarmigan, Rosy Finch, Lewis's Woodpecker, Red Crossbill, Pine Grosbeak, Northern Three-toed Woodpecker and Williamson's Sapsucker among others. We will have a local birding guide. Please call David Bradford at 855-2615 if you are interested.

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.....PLEASE WELCOME NEW OG MEMBER: Alice Anne O'Donell of Galveston.

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.....AUGUST 22 OG FIELD TRIP REPORT: The number and variety of birds at Bolivar Flats never fails to delight birders. The August 22 trip participants saw 65 species, most of them at the Flats. American Avocets and Red Knots were absent that day, but otherwise the expected species were there.

About forty people participated, some seeing lifers and some, like me, trying to learn more after many trips. Our leader, Dwight Peake, proved himself a very good teacher. He helped beginners distinguish amongst the six plover species, the seven tern species and various sandpipers. I learned about immature terns.

After some hours at the Flats about half of us followed Dwight to some freshwater ponds on East Galveston Island. At the first we finally saw American Avocets as well as herons and ducks. But sightings at the second pond were the best experience of the day for me. The light was perfect and the distance not too great for Dwight to help us compare Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers. We could also compare dowitchers: scruffy-plumaged adults versus sleek immatures, and short-billed immatures with "tiger-striped" tertials versus long-billed immatures with plain tertials. These comparisons are the sort that used to make me mutter to myself--"They're kidding themselves that they can see that!"--when veterans pointed them out under less than perfect conditions. On this trip, with perfect conditions, beginners could see details clearly. This trip was outstanding. Libby Price

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.....The Second Annual Texas Wildlife Rehabilitation Coalition Benefit Dinner and Auction, November 7, 1992. This year's benefit starts with a cruise on Galveston Bay at 2:00 P.M. OG member and experienced birding guide, David Dauphin, will be on hand for birdwatching. At dark the cruise will continue up the Houston Ship Channel with a catered dinner and auction on board the ship. Cost is \$50.00 per person and reservations are needed. Call Kathy Pyne at 621-8143 or the TWRC Animal Shelter at 468-TWRC for details.

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.....IT'S HOUSTON ARBORETUM AND NATURE CENTER'S 2ND ANNUAL BIRD SEED SALE-A-BRATION TIME AGAIN. Deadline for ordering your seed is October 16. Call the Houston Arboretum at 681-8433 for an order form or pick one up at the October 5 OG meeting. Buying your seed from the Arboretum is a wonderful way for you to support the arboretum and its education and conservation programs. Thistle, oil seed and special mixes will be available again this year. In conjunction with the sale, the arboretum will hold an Open House throughout the day, Sunday, November 1. Bob McFarlane will speak about urban birds and bird walks will be guided by arboretum staff and volunteers.

## NOEL'S NICHE LOOKING BACK

By Noel Pettingell  
10 YEARS AGO/FROM SEPTEMBER 1982 SPOONBILL

Will Old Birders Learn New Tricks? by Randy Pinkston  
The American Ornithologists' Union (more often referred to as the AOU) has the last word in debate concerning avian taxonomy in North America. Unique among vertebrate taxonomists, ornithologists attempt to standardize both English and Latin names for species and the AOU's official word can be found in the 5th edition Check-list of North American Birds (published 1957). Ironically the AOU has published 34 supplements to the checklist to date.

The sixth edition of the checklist will be issued next year, the AOU's 100th anniversary. It will provide revised taxonomy, AOU numbers, distribution and other information for all bird species of the United States (including Hawaii), Canada, Bermuda, the West Indies and

Middle America (Mexico through Panama), including adjacent islands. All decisions on taxonomic changes and English names were made by consensus or majority vote of the AOU Committee on Classification and Nomenclature, after consideration of the contributions and suggestions of many other individuals and groups as well as analysis of the pertinent literature.

## ARTICLES

### RARE BIRD ILLUMINATES BITTER DILEMMA

To kill or not to kill one of a nearly extinct species?  
by Carol Kaesuk Yoon

When Edmund Smith saw a nondescript black and white bird that he couldn't recognize flying over the hood of his car in central Somalia, he had little idea that he had caught a glimpse of the Bulu Burti Boubou, an extremely rare species of shrike previously unknown to Western science.

Working with Mr. Smith, a biologist, researchers in Somalia quickly captured the bird, still the only known example of the new species. But when they did, they found themselves in an ethical quandary becoming more and more common among biologists: to kill or not to kill.

Scientists out [in the field] discovering new species have a long history of dutifully shooting, poisoning, drowning, crushing or otherwise doing in their finds to preserve them for future reference and study. The team of biologists who discovered the boubou (pronounced Boo-boo) bucked over 200 years of tradition. Instead of preserving their only specimen as skin and skeleton, they kept it captive for a year, then returned it to the wild, hoping it would help propagate its presumably beleaguered species.

When the robin-sized bird blew off, it left behind a handful of feathers, some photographs, a few blood samples and an intense dispute about whether a very rare animal is more valuable dead or alive.

When a species is discovered, biologists normally choose one individual, the "type," as the standard that determines whether any other individual belongs to that species or to another. Because it was the only one they had, biologists chose the boubou as its species type. To systematists, biologists who specialize in discovering, naming and understanding the evolutionary relationships of species, the idea of letting the boubou type fly off was almost criminal.

The description of the new species was first published last year in *Ibis*, an ornithological journal, and was written about in a recent issue of *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*, a news magazine for scientists. The lone shrike has since engendered strong feelings and harsh words both in letters to journals and in conversations among biologists. While preservation-minded biologists have praised the release of the bird, others, especially museum systematists, call it short-sighted and overly sentimental.

As species after species approaches the brink of extinction, this choice has become more common and more pressing. Many new species are so rare that if biologists collect and kill even a single animal, they fear that they could actually push the species into extinction.

But other researchers contend that if scientists do not keep and kill their find, there will be nothing left with which to study the species but the fragmentary information and material that can be gleaned from a quick look at the life animal. Besides, they say, any species so close to extinction is doomed anyway.

Dr. Nigel Collar research fellow at the International Council for Bird Preservation in Cambridge, England, was the conservationist who strongly advised the biologists in Somalia to release the boubou.

But systematists like Dr. Storrs L. Olson, curator of birds at the National Museum of Natural History at the

Smithsonian, reject the notion that taking one bird from a species could be enough to tip the scales from survival to extinction. He called this view pseudo-conservation. "It's sentimentality getting in the way of good science," he said. "It's not rational. It's not logical." Most systematists say the release of a bird that defines a new species is a serious mistake...And for systematists, unlike conservationists, studying an extinct bird, even a fossil bird, can be just as instructive as studying a living species. Dr. Scott Lanyon, head of the division of birds at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, said that it was time for systematists to take a stand. He said, "This is a step backwards. There's a misconception out there that the birds are thoroughly known. There are lots of field guides out there based on museum specimens. Now people are asking, 'Since we've got the field guides, why do we need the specimen?' There've even been suggestions that once you've figured out what you want to know from specimens, why not just trash them? There's no way you can know today what you'll need to know about an animal a hundred years from now."

Dr. Richard Banks, a bird systematist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, says the trend away from traditional preservation is growing. "There were two or three instances within the last several years of people publishing photographs of birds, describing new sub-species, with nothing to serve as a specimen," he said. "I think that it's bad business, bad science."

In the case of the boubou, much is unknown and may remain so. The scientists were not even able to determine whether their bird was male or female. Unfortunately, most of the information biologists want cannot be gleaned from photographs or blood samples. Biologists interested in comparing the bird's bones with fossil skeletons, measuring its gut length or studying the details of the patterning of its feathers--the list could go on and on--are out of luck.

Even apart from this dispute, this bird has from the start seemed unable to avoid drama.

After capturing the boubou, biologists videotaped, photographed, tape-recorded and took a blood sample from the bird. But the blood sample was lost through an airline baggage mix-up while en route from Somalia to the biologists in Europe who could have analyzed it. Civil war in Somalia forced the caretaker of the lone shrike back to Europe, taking the bird with him to Germany. When it was returned to Somalia more than a year later the shrike could not go to the place biologists suspected it called home; they left it instead in the Balcad Nature Reserve, safer from the war than the shrubs around the Bulu Burti hospital grounds, where it had been found.

Eventually one of the boubou's genes was analyzed with DNA from feathers that were preserved in alcohol. And more blood for future analysis was taken and preserved. When the DNA data were analyzed and compared with the segment of DNA from other shrikes, the results confirmed what biologists strongly suspected when they first saw the bird: the Somali shrike was different enough from the other known shrikes to be considered a new species.

Dr. Lanyon said of the biologists: "I realize that these people see themselves as heroes. But that bird is almost certainly dead now anyway. If that bird is from the area that they captured it in, why would you ever want to put it out somewhere else? The best chance of having it find a mate, especially if it's so rare, is putting it back where you found it. This is supposed to be about species conservation, not individual conservation."

To a population biologist, says Dr. Lanyon, most species of small birds and mammals are not limited in their numbers by their abilities to reproduce or to find a mate but by the amount of habitat available to them. These animals typically produce too many offspring to be supported by the environment, and removal of one or a few individuals should not affect the fate of these species in the slightest.

Dr. Jared Diamond, a research associate in the bird department at the American Museum of Natural History said

this logic is flawed. "If the thing is in trouble, it's in trouble...but it would be absurd to say that everything in trouble is doomed." Dr. Diamond said that some species had grown back to strength from very few individuals. "The famous cases that come immediately to mind," he said, "are the Chatham Island Black Robin, in the New Zealand region, that came back from seven individuals, of which two were females and five were males. There was a breeding program launched and it's now back up to 100. And the Mauritius Kestrel, I believe, it came back from one or two pairs."

"No conservationist is willing to give up on a species."

The dispute over whether to kill or to let live extends to other animals as well. It recently flared over an endangered shrew after two specimens were killed and kept. The discoverers had named the shrew *Crocidura desperata*, "to point out the desperate situation of the new species."

"The days of shooting everything in sight as a means of identification are long past," said Dr. Charles Walcott, executive director of the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. "And if you'd got the last Ivory-billed Woodpecker, you'd feel rather awful about collecting it. I think you're caught between a rock and a hard place, and these situations are only going to get more common."

[Submitted by Bob Honig. Reprinted from The New York Times, April 28, 1992.]

#### SOME GENERAL PROBLEMS OF FIELD IDENTIFICATION

by Lawrence G. Balch

[Reprinted with permission from the Illinois Audubon Bulletin #179, Winter 1976-77. Submitted by Arch Dillard.]

It seems to me that most, if not all, field identification problems can be related to three factors: Lack of knowledge, observational factors, and psychological influences. Any birder can minimize (but never entirely eliminate) his field identification problems. All that is required is work and an awareness of these factors. Let's look at each of them.

#### KNOWING WHAT TO LOOK FOR

The old saying-- "If you don't know what you're looking for, you won't find it"--doesn't apply in birding. The less that you know about accipiters, for example, the easier it is to find a Cooper's Hawk. I base this statement on the number of Cooper's Hawks reported by beginning birders as compared to those reported by those reported by more knowledgeable and experienced observers. Long-billed Dowitchers are another example these birds, too, are more easily found by the less knowledgeable. And, more than one author has noted (facetiously, of course) how many more rarities he saw in his early days of birding.

Seriously, though, it's obvious that the more you know, the more accurate your identifications will be, and the fewer birds you'll have to pass over. Nothing is more frustrating than discovering, long after the birds have vanished, that what you thought was your first-ever LeConte's Sparrow might have been a Sharp-tailed Sparrow because you didn't know enough to look for the color of the median stripe.

I assume that anyone who really wants to improve his identification skills has already gone through the field guides to learn the distinguishing characteristics of the species that he might see, and those of the species with which they might be confused. This is a necessary first step in knowing what to look for, but there will still be problems. I once set out to memorize all the important field marks for all the species in Peterson's guide. I thought that would be a panacea for all my field problems,

and I'd be able to identify every bird from then on. My intentions were good but naive, because field guides are limited out of necessity by their format. Guides do not have the space to illustrate or discuss all of the female, immature and juvenile plumages, or the range of variation in each species. Furthermore, I know of no guide that is free from errors of fact, or omission or of emphasis.

Let me give two examples that show why you have to go beyond the field guides in order to become a more expert observer.

1) The Rough-legged Hawks shown in the field guides are typical first-winter birds. But there are adults and young of both light and dark phases, as well as intermediate forms. Furthermore, there is a great deal of variation even within any one of these types. So, many individuals appear appreciably different from the illustrations, and are either left unidentified or are identified as other species. However, if you can learn enough about this species' plumages to be able to identify correctly almost all the Rough-legged Hawks that you will see.

2) One of the field guides says, in reference to Barrow's and Common Goldeneyes, "In the winter it is not safe to tell females except by the males they are with." In fact, female Barrow's Goldeneyes can be distinguished from female Common Goldeneyes even in flight, if you know what to look for and have the necessary experience everywhere.

Before someone gets the impression I'm knocking the field guides, let me say most emphatically that I am not. They have to be any birder's primary identification aid. They're adequate for the vast majority of birds that you see, but other sources will have to be consulted for those few that give you problems. What sources? I've already mentioned other ornithological references and a specimen collection. But most important is your careful observations over a long period of time. If you have learned to take field notes from careful observations, you can always turn later to other references and collections to identify a bird. And if you have the patience to make careful and critical examination of birds that you see in the field, you may even discover new identification marks.

#### SEEING WHAT IS REALLY THERE

Several winters ago at Illinois Beach State Park, a bird quickly flew by a small group of birders. All called the bird a Goshawk, but some said that its upperparts were brown, and others said that they were gray. How could different observers, all capable and experienced, see different colors on a bright, sunny day? Perhaps it had something to do with the fact that they had only a very quick look, which always causes problems. But the eye can be fooled even under more leisurely circumstances. A few years ago, a Spotted Redshank was reported in New Jersey. This is a dark Eurasian shorebird with red legs, about the size and shape of a Greater Yellowlegs. The bird was seen at a considerable distance through telescopes. Although quite a number of people identified it as a Spotted Redshank, it was finally determined that the dark color was oil and the bird was a Greater Yellowlegs. But what about the apparently red color? Well, those of you who examine birds carefully may have noticed that the leg color of yellowlegs varies some from yellow to a more orange-yellow, and that late in the day, as the sunlight gets redder, so do other colors. Furthermore, the chromatic aberration in some telescopes can give a red tint to the leg color.

These examples and others show that what you see is not always what is really there. What you see is affected by distance, duration, angle and quality of light, and other factors.

**SIZE:** I often hear statements such as, "It was too big to be a crow." We all get impressions of the size of a bird seen at a distance, but those impressions are largely subjective unless the bird is next to a familiar object. Apparent size depends on apparent distance, and that is often difficult to judge. I have been fooled so often on

the size of a bird that I believe that the only reliable description of the size of a bird is one that compares it to other nearby birds or objects. Mis-impression of size is not limited to instances where the bird is far away either. From a blind, I once watched a Least Bittern only two feet away that I had at first thought must be a pygmy or runt bird because it seemed smaller than an American Robin. Only when the bird returned to its nest, at my accustomed viewing distance, could I see that it was of normal size.

**LIGHT:** Trying to see colors on a bird against an overcast sky is a frustration known to every birder. But strong, bright sunlight can also cause problems by washing out colors. I find that bright sunlight sometimes makes the black wingtips of adults gulls almost impossible to see at a distance, for example. The angle of the sunlight is often important. I have before me two slides of a pair of Western Gulls standing together. They were taken a few minutes apart, from the same place. During that time the gulls turned slightly but did not move their location. Yet the slight shift in the angle of reflection from their backs changed their apparent mantle color. In one slide, it is the dark gray expected for the particular race involved; in the other slide, however, the mantle color is slaty-black, as in a Greater Black-backed Gull. The angle of light especially affects the sheen of iridescent feathers. Look for a purple-headed Mallard drake when one swims directly away from you, especially when it is backlit. After you find one, you'll be more reluctant to identify scap based on the head colors given in the field guides.

## CLEARING HOUSE

### CLEARING HOUSE August, 1992

Editors: Phyllis and Tony Frank

A total of 155 species were reported for the month, including some shorebirds species that have been reported all summer. Sharp-shinned Hawk, Bonaparte's Gull, and Groove-billed Ani were especially notable for the month.

Many thanks to everyone who submitted reports and documentation. Report are due by September 3rd, but early reports are welcomed. The CH format remains the same this month. The listing uses the following format: bird name, early late dates, reports/total and summary by county or detailed listing. The format of the county summary is as follows: county designation - number of reports/number of birds. The detailed listing format is as follows: county- (number of birds) day, observer code. Very rare birds are underlined. Birds with no previous record on date or vagrant status appear in bold. Birds new to the checklist are capitalized and underlined. Please remember to submit notes on all those good birds. And with all the reminders completed - on to the birds.

Grebe, Pied-bill 1-29 8/85 BR-4/29 CH-4/56  
Pelican, Amer Wht 15-29 4/380 BR-2/365 GA-1/3 HA-1/12  
Pelican, Brown 9-29 4/296 GA-4/296  
Corm, Dbl-crested 9-29 5/47 BR-(1)20,HLW; CH-SP(24)29,RU;  
GA-(1)9,JJW; GA-(1)9,GS; GA-(20)16,RU  
Corm, Olivaceous 9-29 8/264 BR-1/6 CH-1/28 GA-5/172  
HA-1/58  
Anhinga 9-16 2/121 HA-(120)16,GS; JE-NT(1)9,A  
Frigatebird, Magn 9-29 4/86 CH-1/69 GA-3/17  
Bittern, Least 1-9 2/2 BR-(1)1,PJR; CH-AW(1)9,A  
Heron, Great Blue 1-29 15/88 BR-4/51 CH-3/5 GA-5/25 HA-3/7  
Egret, Great 1-29 16/352 BR-4/149 CH-5/125  
GA-5/58 HA-1/18 JE-1/2  
Egret, Snowy 1-29 17/502 U-1/40 BR-4/217 CH-4/92  
GA-4/74 HA-3/70 JE-1/9

Heron, Little Blu 1-29 11/294 BR-4/79 CH-4/211 GA-2/2  
HA-1/2  
Heron, Tricolored 1-29 13/79 BR-3/36 CH-5/12 GA-4/10  
HA-1/21  
Egret, Reddish 1-29 8/102 BR-3/14 GA-4/86 HA-1/2  
Egret, Cattle 1-29 15/1223 BR-4/680 CH-5/316  
GA-4/139 HA-1/38 JE-1/50  
Heron, Grn-backed 1-29 16/42 BR-4/20 CH-5/12 GA-2/2  
HA-4/7 JE-1/1  
Nt-Heron, Blk-crn 1-29 6/19 BR-2/4 CH-2/9 GA-1/2 HA-1/4  
Nt-Heron, Yel-crn 9-29 6/17 BR-2/10 CH-1/1 GA-1/2 HA-2/4  
Ibis, White 1-29 11/170 BR-4/128 CH-3/20 GA-3/8  
HA-1/14  
Ibis, White-faced 1-29 11/350 BR-4/95 CH-4/249 GA-1/2  
JE-2/4  
Spoonbill, Roseat 6-29 10/280 BR-2/70 CH-4/188 GA-4/22  
Stork, Wood 1-20 4/98 BR-(9)1,PJR; BR-(50)15,HAFT;  
BR-BW(25)20,HLW; HA-(14)16,GS  
Whsl-Duck, Fulvs 6-29 3/86 BR-SB(19)29,WP; CH-(60)6,G;  
CH-(7)28,G  
Whsl-Duck, Blk-bd 15-15 1/5 BR-BW(5)15,HAFT  
Duck, Mottled 1-29 11/171 BR-4/75 CH-5/88 HA-1/4 JE-1/4  
Teal, Blue-winged 1-29 5/42 BR-4/23 CH-1/19  
Vulture, Black 1-29 7/95 BR-4/92 CH-2/2 GA-1/1  
Vulture, Turkey 1-28 9/30 BR-3/19 CH-2/5 GA-2/4  
HA-1/1 JE-1/1  
Osprey 16-16 1/1 HA-(1)16,GS  
Kite, Am Swl-tail 29-29 1/1 BR-SB(1)29,WP  
Kite, Blk-shouldr 1-20 4/29 BR-3/28 GA-1/1  
Kite, Mississippi 15-29 6/15 CH-1/1 HA-5/14  
Harrier, Northern 15-20 2/5 BR-BW(4)15,HAFT; BR-BW(1)20,HLW  
Hawk, Sharp-shin 5-5 1/1 JE-(1)5,JJW  
Hawk, Cooper's 20-30 2/1 JE-(1)20-30,JW  
Hawk, Red-shouldr 15-28 3/5 BR-2/4 GA-1/1  
Hawk, Broad-wingd 14-29 2/2 CH-SP(1)29,RU; HA-(1)14,PM  
Hawk, Swainson's 1-15 3/6 BR-(3)1,PJR; BR-BW(2)15,HAFT;  
CH-(1)9,GS  
Hawk, White-taild 20-20 1/1 BR-BW(1)20,HLW  
Hawk, Red-taild 1-15 2/3 BR-(2)1,PJR; BR-(1)15,HAFT  
Bobwhite, Northrn 1-15 3/6 BR-2/4 CH-1/2  
Rail, Clapper 1-29 9/25 BR-3/6 CH-2/7 GA-2/3 HA-1/2  
JE-1/7  
Rail, King 6-9 2/8 CH-(2)6,G; CH-AW(6)9,A  
Sora 6-6 1/1 CH-(1)6,G  
Gallinule, Purple 6-28 6/63 BR-2/5 CH-4/58  
Moorhen, Common 1-29 10/522 BR-4/227 CH-5/270 JE-1/25  
Coot, American 9-29 3/9 BR-2/7 JE-1/2  
Plover, Blk-belli 9-29 7/205 BR-2/12 GA-4/192 HA-1/1  
Plover, Snowy 9-16 3/9 GA-3/9  
Plover, Wilson's 6-29 5/84 CH-1/2 GA-4/82  
Plover, Semipalm 1-29 9/132 BR-3/16 CH-1/4 GA-4/108 HA-1/4  
Plover, Piping 9-29 5/131 GA-4/130 HA-1/1  
Killdeer 1-29 18/152 BR-4/45 CH-5/39 GA-5/23  
HA-3/35 JE-1/10  
Oystercatcher, Am 9-29 4/24 GA-4/24  
Stilt, Black-neck 1-30 15/309 BR-4/137 CH-5/103  
GA-4/32 HA-1/7 JE-1/30  
Avocet, American 1-28 3/10 BR-2/2 CH-1/8  
Yellowlegs, Great 9-29 6/43 BR-2/24 CH-2/16 GA-1/2 JE-1/1  
Yellowlegs, Less 1-28 11/144 BR-2/70 CH-5/65 GA-2/3  
HA-1/5 JE-1/1  
yellowlegs, sp. 15-15 1/40 BR-1/40  
Sandprr, Solitary 1-1 1/2 BR-(2)1,PJR  
Willet 1-29 8/219 BR-2/22 CH-1/9 GA-4/181 HA-1/7  
Sandprr, Spotted 1-23 4/9 BR-2/3 GA-1/5 HA-1/1  
Curlew, Long-bill 1-29 8/32 BR-3/5 CH-1/1 GA-4/26  
Godwit, Marbled 9-29 4/111 GA-(58)9,JJW; GA-(12)9,GS;  
GA-(35)16,RU; GA-(6)29,DLR  
Turnstone, Ruddy 9-29 5/55 BR-1/10 GA-4/45  
Knot, Red 9-16 2/2 GA-BF(1)9,JJW; GA-(1)16,RU  
Sanderling 9-29 5/589 BR-1/6 GA-4/583  
Sandprr, Semipalm 1-16 4/121 BR-1/40 CH-1/2 GA-1/72 HA-1/7  
Sandprr, Western 1-29 11/2991 BR-3/512 CH-2/9 GA-4/2468  
HA-2/2  
Sandprr, Least 1-23 7/333 BR-3/310 GA-2/7 HA-1/15 JE-1/1  
Sandprr, Pectoral 9-28 4/96 CH-2/10 HA-1/6 JE-1/80

Dunlin	9-9	1/7 GA-(7)9,GS	HA-2/14 JE-1/9
peep, sp.	15-30	2/230 BR-1/200 GA-1/30	Vireo, White-eyed
Sandpr, Stilt	1-29	6/259 BR-2/245 CH-2/9 GA-1/2 HA-1/3	15-29 3/11 BR-3/11
Sandpr, Buf-brst	29-29	1/1 GA-(1)29,DLR	Vireo, Red-eyed
Dowitcher, S-bill	9-20	4/91 BR-1/40 CH-1/30 GA-2/21	28-28 1/1 GA-(1)28,G
Dowitcher, L-bill	1-28	7/283 BR-2/220 CH-4/53 JE-1/10	Warb, Yellow
dowitcher, sp.	15-29	2/63 BR-2/63	20-29 2/12 BR-BW(3)20,HLW; BR-SB(9)29,WP
Phalarope, Wilson	9-9	1/3 GA-(3)9,JJW	Warb, Blk-and-wht
Gull, Laughing	9-29	9/4296 BR-2/240 CH-2/251	20-28 2/5 BR-BW(1)20,HLW; GA-(4)28,G
		GA-4/3748 HA-1/57	Redstart, Amer
Gull, Bonaparte's	9-9	1/1 GA-(1)9,GS	29-29 1/1 GA-(1)29,DLR
Gull, Ring-billed	9-29	5/27 BR-1/1 GA-3/25 HA-1/1	Warb, Mourning
Gull, Herring	9-16	3/7 GA-3/7	29-29 1/1 BR-SB(1)29,WP
Tern, Gull-billed	1-20	4/28 BR-3/27 CH-1/1	Yellowthroat, Com
Tern, Caspian	9-29	4/14 CH-1/2 GA-3/12	1-28 5/37 BR-2/6 CH-3/31
Tern, Royal	9-29	7/1714 BR-1/1 CH-1/40 GA-4/1671	Warb, Hooded
		HA-1/2	28-28 1/1 GA-(1)28,G
Tern, Sandwich	9-29	3/135 GA-3/135	Warb, Canada
Tern, Common	9-9	3/60 GA-BF(4)9,JJW; GA-(50)9,JJW;	29-29 1/1 BR-SB(1)29,WP
		GA-(6)9,GS	Tanager, Summer
Tern, Forster's	1-29	11/245 BR-3/15 CH-4/48 GA-3/132	29-29 1/1 BR-SB(1)29,WP
		HA-1/50	Cardinal, Northrn
Tern, Least	9-29	6/874 BR-1/20 GA-4/853 HA-1/1	6-29 10/61 BR-3/30 CH-3/8 GA-2/13
Tern, Black	1-29	13/1464 BR-3/545 CH-5/59	HA-1/6 JE-1/4
		GA-4/853 HA-1/7	Dickcissel
Skimmer, Black	1-29	8/235 BR-3/80 CH-1/12 GA-3/134	6-28 4/9 CH-3/8 JE-1/1
		HA-1/9	Sparrow, Seaside
Dove, Rock	1-29	9/141 BR-2/16 CH-1/3 GA-4/87 HA-2/35	6-9 2/7 CH-(4)6,G; GA-(3)9,JJW
Dove, Mourning	1-30	19/626 BR-4/331 CH-6/178	Blackbird, Red-wg
		GA-6/31 HA-2/82 JE-1/4	1-28 10/738 BR-3/114 CH-4/558
Dove, Inca	9-29	5/17 GA-2/8 HA-2/8 JE-1/1	GA-1/60 HA-1/5 JE-1/1
Parakeet, Monk	5-18	2/23 HA-(3)5,PM; HA-(20)18,PM	Meadowlark, East
Cuckoo, Yel-billd	1-28	7/10 U-1/2 BR-2/2 CH-2/2 GA-2/4	1-29 10/129 BR-4/111 CH-4/14 GA-1/2
Ani, Groove-billd	6-6	1/2 CH-(2)6,G	JE-1/2
Owl, Barn	9-29	3/3 BR-1/1 CH-2/2	Grackle, Gr-tail
Owl, Barred	29-29	1/2 BR-SB(2)29,WP	1-29 13/663 BR-3/34 CH-4/490 GA-4/92
Nighthawk, Common	1-29	10/42 BR-2/10 CH-4/12 GA-3/17 HA-1/3	HA-2/47
Chuck-wills-widow	28-28	1/1 GA-(1)28,G	Grackle, Bt-tail
Swift, Chimney	1-23	7/87 BR-3/69 CH-1/1 HA-3/17	1-29 6/76 BR-4/63 CH-2/13
Hummer, Ruby-thrt	6-31	4/6 BR-1/2 CH-1/1 HA-1/2 JE-1/1	Grackle, Common
Hummer, Rufous	9-9	1/1 JE-(1)9,JJW	1-28 4/57 BR-1/40 CH-1/1 HA-1/12 JE-1/4
Kingfisher, Beltd	9-29	5/7 BR-1/2 CH-2/3 HA-2/2	Cowbird, Brn-head
Wdpeckr, Red-head	9-23	2/2 CH-(1)9,GS; HA-(1)23,PM	6-29 4/54 BR-2/33 CH-2/21
Wdpeckr, Red-bell	1-29	6/10 BR-4/7 CH-1/1 HA-1/2	Oriole, Northern
Wdpeckr, Downy	28-28	1/2 GA-(2)28,G	28-29 2/5 GA-(4)28,G; GA-(1)29,DLR
Wdpeckr, Pileated	29-29	1/1 BR-SB(1)29,WP	Sparrow, House
Flycatch, Olv-sid	29-29	1/1 CH-SP(1)29,RU	9-30 10/105 CH-2/5 GA-5/35 HA-2/55
Wood-Pewee, East	28-29	3/6 BR-1/1 GA-2/5	JE-1/10
Flycatch, Acadian	28-28	1/1 GA-(1)28,G	
Flycatch, Least	9-28	2/2 CH-AW(1)9,A; GA-(1)28,G	
Flycatch, Gr Crst	9-29	3/9 BR-1/6 CH-1/2 GA-1/1	
Kingbird, Eastern	1-29	13/203 BR-3/78 CH-6/108 GA-3/13	
		JE-1/4	
Flycatch, Ss-tail	1-28	11/49 BR-3/20 CH-4/25 GA-3/3 JE-1/1	
Lark, Horned	9-29	3/7 GA-3/7	
Martin, Purple	9-28	4/19 BR-1/3 GA-3/16	
Swallow, Tree	6-29	4/34 CH-3/27 GA-1/7	
Swallow, N R-wing	15-29	3/72 BR-2/12 CH-1/60	
Swallow, Bank	6-29	3/57 BR-1/15 CH-2/42	
Swallow, Cliff	29-29	2/33 BR-SB(13)29,WP; CH-SP(20)29,RU	
Swallow, Barn	1-29	14/1411 BR-4/33 CH-6/1346	
		GA-3/27 HA-1/5	
Jay, Blue	1-31	6/32 CH-1/3 GA-2/17 HA-2/10 JE-1/2	
Crow, American	1-29	10/66 BR-4/32 CH-4/32 HA-1/1 JE-1/1	
Crow, Fish	9-9	1/1 JE-NT(1)9,A	
Chickadee, Carol	15-29	5/25 BR-3/22 CH-1/1 HA-1/2	
Titmouse, Tufted	1-20	2/7 BR-(1)1,PJR; BR-BW(6)20,HLW	
Wren, Carolina	1-29	6/22 BR-4/17 GA-1/4 HA-1/1	
Wren, Marsh	6-9	2/6 CH-(3)6,G; CH-AW(3)9,JJW	
Gnatcatch, Blu-gra	9-28	2/9 GA-(8)28,G; JE-(1)9,A	
Robin, American	1-29	2/2 HA-(1)19,PM; HA-(1)20,PM	
Mockingbird, N	1-31	15/148 BR-3/72 CH-4/30 GA-5/24	
		HA-2/21 JE-1/1	
Shrike, Lbgerhed	1-29	12/86 BR-4/37 CH-4/41 GA-2/3	
		HA-1/4 JE-1/1	
Starling, Euro	1-31	13/280 BR-3/100 CH-3/56 GA-4/101	

An American Pipit was reported but no notes were submitted.

TOTAL INDIVIDUALS: 27417

LIST OF OBSERVER CODES:

Mike Austin (A)  
 Don & Lee Richardson (DLR)  
 Gail Luckner (G)  
 Gail Luckner, Steve Matherly (GS)  
 Houston Arboretum Field Trip, Jerry Caraviotis, Julia Ricketts (HAFT)  
 Bob Honig, Geneva LaVern, Doug Williams (HLW)  
 Jana & John Whittle (JJW)  
 John Whittle (JW)  
 Marvin & Ellen Owens (MO)  
 Patrick Baum, Joe Farrell, Richard Uzar (PJR)  
 Peggy Milstead (PM)  
 Richard Uzar (RU)  
 Warren Pruess & Brazosport Birders (WP)

LIST OF LOCATION CODES:

Anahauc NWR (AW)  
 Bolivar Flats (BF)  
 Big Slough (BS)  
 Brazoria NWR (BW)  
 North Fork Taylor's Bayou (NT)  
 San Bernard NWR (SB)  
 Smith Point (SP)  
 Texas City Dike (TCD)

LIST OF COUNTY CODES: Brazoria (BR)

Chambers (CH)  
 Fort Bend (FB)  
 Galveston (GA)  
 Harris (HA)  
 Jefferson (JE)  
 Upper Texas Coast (U)

Osprey - G. D. Luckner August 16, 1992

At 8:07 A.M. an adult male Osprey was sighted at the Houston Ship Channel near the mouth of the San Jacinto River. The bird was seen perched and in flight in excellent light from distances of approximately 100' to 300' with TSN-2 scope at 30X and 10X42 binoculars over about 5 minute period. Photographs were obtained. A large, crested, eagle-like raptor initially seen perched on a snag in the water. Entirely dark brown above and unmarked white below with a shaggy brown and white crest. In flight from below,

dark carpal patches and heavily barred flight feathers and retrices were evident. A male as indicated by the lack of a dark necklace.

American Swallow-tailed Kite - Warren Pruess

Observed at 8:45 A.M. with six members of Brazosport Birders for about one minute from a distance of 75-100 yards at 50' to 80' elevation. Heard a couple of "buzz-type" calls. Soaring about the size of a Red-tailed Hawk. Observed flying toward observers from north. Large, white-headed bird with deep graceful wing beats. Began to glide and banked to east and then to west showing sharply contrasting pattern of white head, neck, underbody, flanks, covert and wing linings against black flight feathers and long, deeply forked tail.

Sharp-shinned Hawk - J. and J. Whittle August 5, 1992

Observed for approximately 40 minutes upon two occasions along a divided highway with wooded areas primarily tallow trees from distances of 50 feet and greater with 7X35 binoculars. Observed perching and in flight. The flight was low, with three of four brisk wing flaps, followed by a glide, typical accipiter style.

The bird was first noticed as a small hawk, scarcely larger than a Kestrel. Closer observation brought out the rounded head, long thin yellow legs, and very long tail. When perched, the wing tips came approximately one-third of the way down the tail. The eye appeared large and placed more or less centrally on the head. When flying, the wings appeared broad in chord with rounded tips, and with a very definite "wrist" on the leading edge. The back and wings were dark brown with a few small white patches. The head was dark brown, with a lighter line above the eye. The underside was light (white or perhaps pale cream) with very bold extensive streaking on the chin and upper breast, giving way to heavy brown barring on the belly and thinner barring on the leg feathers.

The long tail was banded light and dark brown above (4-5 bands) and below with a brighter white very thin terminal band. The tail feathers were carefully examined and the outer tail feathers came all the way to the end of the tail, with a squared off look. The beak was hooked, gray with a small yellow cere. Four photo taken size may be too small.

Cooper's Hawk - John Whittle August 28, 1992

Observed perched and in flight along service road. Flight angle was not good for observing subtleties of wing shape and head position in flight. Observed from 35 feet and greater with 7X35 binoculars.

Medium sized hawk, perceptibly larger than a crow. Typical accipiter shape, especially wings and tail in flight. The tail feather were carefully studied. The outer feathers were very significantly shorter than the others giving a very noticeable rounded appearance to the tail. The eye was noted a being placed forward in the head, near the bill. Crown dark blue, back dark steel blue with patches of brownish feathers. Upper surface of tail brownish blue with lighter bands, and a 3/4 inch wide bright whiter terminal band. Breast and belly were barred with relatively wide reddish-brown bars, lighter on the central belly. The underwings were white with three of four smudgy darker brown bands. The bill was strongly hooked, dark at the tip and lighter gray nearer the base. The legs were yellow and noticeably thick and sturdy. A similar hawk was observed less well at this exact location on August 20 and believed to be the same bird.

Sora - G. D. Luckner August 6, 1992

At 6:25 P.M. a Sora was sighted an Anahuac NWR. Seen for about two minutes in excellent light from a distance of about 40' with 10X42 binoculars. A small, chunky rail with a short, thick, dull yellowish bill. Face and throat black. Auriculars, sides of neck, and breast were gray. Belly grayish-brown barred with white. Crown and nape olive-brown. Remainder of bird not well seen.

Bonaparte's Gull - G. D. Luckner August 9, 1992

At 11 A.M., a Bonaparte's Gull in first-winter plumage was sighted at Bolivar Flats, Galveston county. The bird was seen in flight in the company of Laughing Gulls for about 90 seconds in excellent light with 10X42 binoculars from distances of 20' to 100'. Steve Matherly also observed the bird and concurs with the identification.

Smaller than nearby Laughing Gulls. Underparts appeared entirely white. Wing linings gray; underside of primaries basically white; outer web of p1 dark; trailing edge of underwing appeared dark. Head and face white with dark earpatch. Bill appeared black. Nape, mantle, scapulars, and back gray. Rump white. Tail rounded and white with dark subterminal band which did not appear to extend to the outer retrices. Upperside of wings basically whitish. Very dark carpal and secondary bars. Outer web of p1 dark; primaries dark terminally; secondaries white terminally. Legs and feet not seen. A first winter bird as indicated by very dark carpal and secondary bars and lack of hood.

Groove-billed Ani - G. D. Luckner August 6, 1992

At 5:11 P.M., two Groove-billed Anis were sighted in heavy brush bordering an agricultural field at the intersection of FM 562 and FM 2936. Seen perched and in flight in the company of Great-tailed Grackles for about two minutes in excellent light from distances of about 25' to 50' with 10X42 binoculars. The two birds were essentially identical and were significantly smaller than nearby Great-tailed Grackles. Iridescent black overall with long, "floppy" tail and very large, heavy, strongly curved upper mandible. Bill grooves were not visible. In flight, wings and tail appeared rounded. The birds did not vocalize.

Other notes submitted this month include Marbled Godwit and Double-crested Cormorant by J. and J. Whittle and Double-crested Cormorant, Marbled Godwit, Dunlin and Common Tern by G. D. Luckner. Notes on these bird from these observers at similar location were published and/or referenced in the June and/or July CH report. These observers are thanked for their documentation.



## CONTACTS

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- OG FIELD TRIP CHAIRMAN, David Bradford, 18046 Green Hazel, Houston, 77084. 713/855-2615.
- SEND CLEARING HOUSE bird sightings to: Clearing House, (OG), P.O. Box 271374, Houston 77277.
- TEXAS RARE BIRD ALERT TAPE, sponsored by Houston Audubon Society, 992-2757.
- SEND SPOONBILL MATERIAL to Editor, Judy Boyce, 5546 Aspen, Houston 77081, Home: 668-5359, Work: 771-2432 Fax: 713/771-2432 Monday-Friday, business hours.
- OG MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION, dues, subscriptions and address changes. Frank Peace, 15130 Turkey Creek Drive, Houston, 77079, (713) 713/870-8238. Annual dues \$15. Non-member Spoonbill subscriptions \$13.

# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

From 1984 through 1986, I conducted a study of Western Kingbirds in Houston and vicinity, focusing in particular on their strong, and still not entirely explained, preference for nesting at Houston Lighting & Power Company (HL&P) substations; in fact, they nest at Houston area substations almost to the complete exclusion of other apparently suitable nesting habitat. Starting with a report by Steve Williams at a substation on Westpark near Hillcroft, the study recorded Western Kingbirds at 28 substations in west and southwest Houston, west Harris County, and northeast Ft. Bend County, with nesting confirmed at 21 of these sites as well as at two non-substation sites. (In the years since the study concluded, nesting has been confirmed at at least one additional substation and two additional non-substation sites, including the only site in east Harris County, reported by Gail Luckner this year in La Porte.)

After five years of procrastination, I have finally written up the results of this study; they will appear in the near future in the Bulletin of the Texas Ornithological Society. This may be of some interest to a number of OG members, because without the help of 28 volunteers -- almost all OG members -- I never could have so thoroughly documented the Kingbird's distribution. Margaret Anderson, Ron Braun, Caroline Callery, Jerry Caraviotis, Frank Cleland, Maureen Crowell, Larry Gamble, Steve Gast, Bill Goloby, Martha Henschen, Barbara & Doug Hortvet, Margaret & Paul Jones, Marion & Sue Krug, Mark Kulstad, Bob McFarlane, Peggy Milstead, Richard Orr, Frank Peace, Noel Pettingell, Don & Lee Richardson, Laura Singleton, Wanda Smith, Rob Thacker, and Doug Williams submitted reports from locations throughout Harris, Ft. Bend, and Galveston Counties in 1986. Their data helped turn the study from a collection of scattered observations into a more organized and meaningful body of information.

In short, the volunteers allowed the scope of the study to expand far beyond what I could accomplish alone, and this reflects on an aspect of the study perhaps as important as any other: it demonstrates what you, the OG membership, can do to gather significant ornithological information. In addition to the above-described nest site preference, significant distributional information was gathered, data that along with subsequent observations have resulted in a change in the status of Western Kingbird on the upper Texas coast checklist. Previously shown as an occasional nester, the Western Kingbird is now listed as a regular breeder. (Checklist Committee take note: it needs further upgrading still, from its "very rare/irregular" June-August status on the 7th edition [1989] of the upper Texas coast checklist -- the Western Kingbird in fact nests every year in numerous locations in Harris and Fort Bend Counties.)

In addition to helping gather data, the volunteers had fun and learned something about Western Kingbirds. Some of the observers became very enthused about their observations, making extra efforts to provide insight into the Kingbird's habits, for example: Jerry Caraviotis seemed to find the project extremely rewarding, writing detailed descriptions of the Kingbirds' status and behavior, including a fascinating account of a hovering display when one of the adults returns to the nest; Mark Kulstad similarly provided copious notes, as well as photographic documentation; and Bill Goloby obtained permission to enter a large HL&P facility where he found approximately one dozen pairs of Western Kingbirds. Even those who did not go to such lengths submitted indispensable observations, demonstrating that such volunteer efforts can greatly increase the scope of a research project beyond that which the principal investigator(s) can undertake.

So, if anyone out there has ideas for other studies, don't hesitate to ask the membership for help. The Western Kingbird study has shown that our membership will respond when help is needed to investigate intriguing ornithological questions. **Bob Honig, 669-6963**

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