

# The Spoonbill

A Publication of the Ornithology Group  
(OG)  
of the Houston Outdoor Nature Club

March 2012  
Vol. 61 No. 3

**Monthly Meeting  
Monday, March 5th**

**Bayland Community Center  
6400 Bissonnet, Houston**

**LEARNING CORNER  
6:30 P.M.**

**GENERAL MEETING - 7:00 P.M.**

## **PROGRAM: "The Smith Point Hawk Watch: 15 Years of Monitoring & Outreach"**

**by Susan A. Heath Ph.D.**

**Avian Conservation Biologist, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory**



Susan has a Ph.D. from George Mason University in Environmental Science and a Masters of Science from the same institution in Biology. Her dissertation dealt with the effects of pesticides on birds that breed in agricultural areas and her master's thesis documented a previously unknown wintering population of waterfowl on the Virginia Piedmont. At GCBO Susan manages several projects including the Smith Point Hawk Watch and an American Oystercatcher Stewardship Program. She also manages GCBO's Site Partner Network, a group of 70 sites, including all U.S. and Mexican states around the Gulf of Mexico, that work together to preserve habitat for migratory birds. Prior to returning to school to follow her passion of avian conservation, Susan worked as a computer security engineer for several major defense contractors in the Washington D.C. area and served as a Naval Officer for four years.

Since 1997, the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and HawkWatch International have coordinated a hawk watch at Smith Point to count the many raptors that pass by the point each day from August 15<sup>th</sup> to November 15<sup>th</sup>. Thus the 2011 season marked the 15<sup>th</sup> year for the Watch. There are 19 regularly occurring species every fall and five additional species have been seen sporadically. This level of species diversity is topped by only one other hawk watch site in the entire United States and the number of individuals counted is higher than the famed site at Cape May, New Jersey. Yearly totals range from a high of 115,316 in 2001 to a low of 24,808 in 2010 with an average of 51,217 individuals. These numbers are driven by the Broad-winged Hawk migration as that is the species most counted at Smith Point. It is not unusual for more than 10,000 raptors to pass by the tower in a single day during the peak of Broad-winged Hawk migration. Come enjoy a presentation on the spectacle that is the Smith Point Hawk Watch by Susan Heath of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory.

# Happy St. Patrick's Day-trip

## **March 17<sup>th</sup> Trip to Formosa-Tejano Wetlands & Environs**

**Viewing Platform Parking Lot off TX 172  
@ 7:30 AM**

Winter is coming to a close, spring is around the corner and with it spring migration. There is no better place to find wintering species and the early arriving migrants than the site of this month's trip, which will be to the Formosa-Tejano Wetlands and Environs, which includes Lake Texana, Palmetto Bend Dam, Lavaca/Navidad Estuary, and Bennett Park. These locations are good for wintering waterfowl that should still be around but less numerous than earlier in the winter and for shorebirds, especially the migrant shorebirds that should already be on the move as they are the earliest migrants and March is a great month for shorebirding. We will also be keeping our eyes out for any of the earlier neotropical migrant songbirds such as Scissor-tailed flycatcher, Yellow-throated vireo, Red-eyed vireo, Blue-winged warbler, Nashville warbler, Northern parula, Yellow-throated warbler, Black-and-white warbler, Louisiana waterthrush, Kentucky warbler, Hooded warbler, Summer tanager, Scarlet tanager, Indigo bunting, Baltimore oriole and Orchard oriole. As you can see March is a great month to be birding where you can get a combination of wintering birds and migrants both shorebirds and songbirds. In March the Formosa-Tejano Wetlands with its variety of habitats plays host to all of the birds mentioned above. It has wetlands and ponds for the waterfowl and shorebirds and it has woodlots for the migrant songbirds. So come out and join us for a fun filled early spring day of birding where we could easily eclipse the 100 species mark for the day.



The plan is to meet in the viewing platform for one of the large ponds on the east side of TX 172 at 7:30 AM. Here's the Google Map's location listing: 28.8005,-96.4604. We can organize from there. To get there take US 59 South out of Houston to Ganado and take the TX 172 exit. Go south on TX 172 through Ganado and past FM 616 and La Ward. Once you get past the FM 616 intersection the viewing platform will be approximately 3 miles further down TX 172 on the east side and you should see other cars in the parking area as well.

Be sure to bring your binoculars, spotting scope, hat, sunscreen, water, camera (if you wish), snacks, and a lunch because we will not be stopping at a place for lunch and will be birding all day.

~ Adam Wood, OG Field Trip Coordinator, [birdsondabrain@earthlink.net](mailto:birdsondabrain@earthlink.net), 713-515-1692

**H.A.S.  
MARCH 14TH  
HISTORY OF BIRD  
CONSERVATION  
MARY ANNE WEBER**



# MARCH & APRIL FIELD TRIPS & EVENTS

**NatureFest 2012**  
**Saturday, March 3, 2012**  
**Jesse Jones Nature Center**  
\*\*\*VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR OG TABLE\*\*\*  
<http://www.hcp4.net/jones/programs/naturefest.htm>

**Monday March 5th**  
**HOGG BIRD SURVEY**  
**MONTHLY EVENT**  
**FIRST MONDAY**  
**CONTACT: AARON STOLEY**

**March 10th**  
**HIGH ISLAND WORK DAY**

**March 17th**  
**EDITH L. MOORE WORK DAY**

**Monday March 12th**  
**HERMANN PARK SURVEY**  
**MONTHLY EVENT**  
**SECOND MONDAY**  
**CONTACT: JIM WINN**

**Saturday March 17th**  
**WILLOW WATERHOLE SURVEY**  
**MONTHLY EVENT**  
**THIRD SATURDAY**  
**CONTACTS: JOY HESTER / MARK MEYER**

**Monday March 19th**  
**Jesse H. Jones Park**  
**THIRD MONDAY BIRD WALK**  
**8 a.m.**  
**(Mar. 19   Apr. 16   May 21)**

**Saturday March 24th**  
**Outdoor Nature Club**  
**Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary**  
**Focus: What's Blooming?**  
**Wildflower Identification**

**GALVESTON**  
**FeatherFest & Nature**  
**Photo Festival**

**APRIL 12th - 15th**

**GALVESTON ISLAND,**  
**TEXAS**

**REGISTRATION**  
**OPEN NOW**

[www.galvestonfeatherfestival.com](http://www.galvestonfeatherfestival.com)

**18th Annual**  
**Booming - N -**  
**Blooming**

**APRIL 14th & 15th**  
**Attwater's Prairie**  
**Chicken**  
**National Wildlife**  
**Refuge**

**Prairie Chicken**  
**Viewing Tours**  
**Bird & Native Plant**  
**Walks**

**Go to the website for**  
**important details**  
<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/texas/attwater>

**Balcones Songbird**  
**Nature Festival**

**APRIL 27th - 30th**

**REGISTRATION**  
**OPEN NOW**

**TEXAS HILL**  
**COUNTRY**

**CANYONLANDS**  
**NATIONAL WILDLIFE**  
**REFUGE**

<http://friendsofbalcones.org>

HOUSTON AUDUBON SOCIETY

**BIRDATHON 2012**  
**MARCH 24 TO MAY 6**

DATES ARE SET  
IT'S TIME TO GET A TEAM TOGETHER  
&

YOUR BINOCULARS READY

reports and pledges due by May 9

**Save**  
**April 11th**  
**for Sibley !**  
**H.A.S.**

*Birds & Blooms*

*calling all nature & bird lovers*  
*March 24th - 25th, 2012*

*Camp Allen Retreat Center*  
*11am Saturday to 1pm Sunday*  
*Camp Allen Retreat Center*

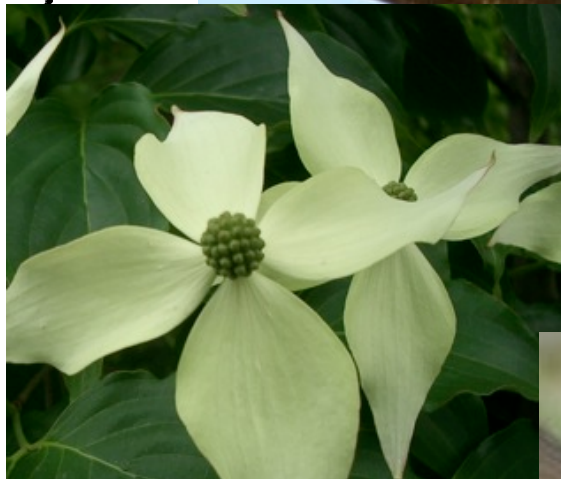
register at: [campallen.org](http://campallen.org)  
To learn more call:  
936-825-7175

*Featured Sessions*

Audubon Presentations  
Live Owl & Hawk Demonstrations  
Spring Migration Habits  
Birding Identification  
Sunrise Bird Watching  
Nature Appreciation Hikes  
Landscaping for Attracting Songbirds



*Bird photo's by*  
*Harlan Evans*



*Wild Dogwood: V. Sims*  
*Central Park, N.Y.*



Tropical Birding will once again be joining us this spring in High Island!  
Bringing back popular daily walks, field trips, and conducting work shops.

**THE DAILY WALKS START ON MARCH 31st**

Find schedule, topics, and how to sign up for workshops on the Houston Audubon Website



# Brazos Bend State Park

## OG Winter Hike – January 21, 2012

Report by Bill Godley

Over 25 OG members tolerated variable weather but, nonetheless, enjoyed a total of **94 bird species** with the park and Davis Estates property nearby on Saturday. Starting out at the 40 Acre Lake at 7:30 a.m. in misty mild weather, the group, led by park volunteer and fellow OG member Bill Godley, the group circled the entire lake before stopping for lunch at the Elm Lake picnic area. 40 Acre Lake sightings, nearly 60 species, included Golden-crowned Kinglet and excellent looks at Fox Sparrow. At Elm Lake a cool light rain did not prevent sighting of the male Vermilion Flycatcher which has been resident for nearly 4 months this fall-winter period. An Osprey was also seen over Elm Lake confirming that water levels are improving all over the park. The alligators were out in good numbers too enjoying the balmy weather.

After lunch, groups independently worked other areas of the park including Old Horseshoe Lake which featured both Cinnamon Teal and Solitary Sandpiper among lots of waterfowl. These two sightings were both misses on the Brazos Bend CBC which tallied 158 species, one short of their record.

In mid-afternoon, the remaining group journeyed to the private Davis Estates property (which includes the county landfill) for a short hike at the main lake. Canvasback, Vesper Sparrow, Crested Caracara, Bald Eagle (with prey), and a stunning adult White-tailed Hawk brought the day to a close at nearly 4 o'clock. The full list of sightings, revised based on email received the day following the hike, are included herein.



Bill Godley and the staff at Brazos Bend State Park thank all of you who attended for your interest and participation. Texas Parks and Wildlife has taken quite a blow to its budget due to drought, fire, and reduced funding. Brazos Bend is the “jewel” in their crown and, with the help of members of OG, will continue to benefit from you support. Come back soon and often. Thank you.

# Winter Bird Sightings (Oct 1-Apr 1)

*(Seen during Ornithology Group Hike at BBSPark and Davis Estates)*

Date: January 21, 2012 - Revised Final Feb 7, 2012

1	Pied-billed Grebe	X	63	Vermilion Flycatcher	X
2	Least Grebe		64	Loggerhead Shrike	X
3	Double-crested Cormorant	X	65	White-eyed Vireo	
4	Anhinga	X	66	Blue-headed Vireo	
5	American Bittern		67	Blue Jay	X
6	Great Blue Heron	X	68	American Crow	X
7	Great Egret	X	69	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	X
8	Snowy Egret	X	70	Carolina Chickadee	X
9	Little Blue Heron	X	71	Tufted Titmouse	X
10	Tricolored Heron	X	72	Brown Creeper	
11	Cattle Egret		73	Carolina Wren	X
12	Green Heron		74	House Wren	
13	Black-crowned Night-Heron	X	75	Sedge Wren	
14	Yellow-crowned Night-Heron		76	Marsh Wren	
15	White Ibis	X	77	Golden-crowned Kinglet	X
16	White-faced Ibis	X	78	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	X
17	Roseate Spoonbill	X	79	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	X
18	Black Vulture	X	80	Eastern Bluebird	X
19	Turkey Vulture	X	81	Hermit Thrush	
20	Black-bellied Whistling Duck	X	82	American Robin	X
21	Greater White-fronted Goose		83	Gray Catbird	X
22	Snow Goose		84	Northern Mockingbird	X
23	Canada Goose		85	Brown Thrasher	X
24	Wood Duck	X	86	European Starling	
25	Gadwall	X	87	American Pipit	X
26	American Wigeon	X	88	Cedar Waxwing	X
27	Mallard		89	Orange-crowned Warbler	X
28	Mottled Duck		90	Yellow-rumped Warbler	X
29	Blue-winged Teal	X	91	Common Yellowthroat	X
30	Cinnamon Teal	X	92	Wilson's Warbler	X
31	Northern Shoveler	X	93	Pine Warbler	X
32	Northern Pintail	X	94	Chipping Sparrow	
33	Green-winged Teal	X	95	Field Sparrow	
34	Ring-necked Duck	X	96	Vesper Sparrow - DE	X
35	Lesser Scaup	X	97	Savannah Sparrow	X
36	Canvasback - DE	X	98	LeConte's Sparrow	
37	Ruddy Duck		99	Song Sparrow	X
38	Bald Eagle - DE	X	100	Lincoln's Sparrow	
39	Northern Harrier	X	101	Swamp Sparrow	X
40	Cooper's Hawk	X	102	White-throated Sparrow	X
41	Red-shouldered Hawk	X	103	White-crowned Sparrow	X
42	Red-tailed Hawk	X	104	Northern Cardinal	X
43	White-tailed Hawk - DE	X	105	Red-winged Blackbird	X
44	Crested Caracara - DE	X	106	Eastern Meadowlark	X
45	American Kestrel - DE	X	107	Common Grackle - DE	X
46	Northern Bobwhite		108	Boat-tailed Grackle	X
47	Sora		109	Great-tailed Grackle - DE	X
48	Common Gallinule	X	110	Brown-headed Cowbird	
49	American Coot	X	111	American Goldfinch	X
50	Sandhill Crane - DE	X		<i>Other Sightings</i>	
51	Killdeer	X	112	Caspian Tern	X
52	Wilson's Snipe	X	113	Winter Wren	X
53	Mourning Dove	X	114	Fox Sparrow	X
54	Barred Owl	X	115	Osprey - Elm	X
55	Great Horned Owl	X	116	Neotropic Cormorant	X
56	Belted Kingfisher	X	117	Laughing Gull - DE	X
57	Red-bellied Woodpecker	X	118	Eurasian Collared-Dove	X
58	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	X	119	Ring-billed Gull - DE	X
59	Downy Woodpecker	X	120	Solitary Sandpiper	X
60	Northern Flicker		121	Caspian Tern	X
61	Pileated Woodpecker	X		<b>TOTAL CURRENT SPECIES</b>	<b>94</b>
62	Eastern Phoebe	X		<i>Revised 1/23 for Additions by Others</i>	

Seen something else? Email: [fribbish@msn.com](mailto:fribbish@msn.com)

## Rosy Outlook for the New Year

by Vicki Sims

Two years ago Billie Strickland and I traveled to Albuquerque in January for one of our wonderful birding adventures. In 2010 Lady Luck cooperated with our journey and we were able to travel easily around to the town's great birding spots and to two of the places that I feel are highlights of a winter trip to New Mexico: Sandia Crest to see the rosy-finches, and Bosque del Apache to watch for eagles, hawks, waterfowl, and to view the Sandhill Cranes.

Albuquerque is a town that spreads out along the base of the Sandia Mountains. The mountains loom over the town to the east and the city stretches out to the west, sprawling on both sides of the Rio Grande River. This places Albuquerque near pine forests, foothills, desert scrub, riparian, and wetland habitats. Birders and other outdoor enthusiasts have a number of ecosystems within close proximity accessible daily.

There are lots of choices for birding around the town, but when you head in for the purpose of bird watching the timing is important. On Saturday and Sunday mornings the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park has a group bird walk that allows birders the opportunity to head to the back fields and ponds which are normally off limits to the public. It is fun to meet the local birders who love this early morning stroll. The scheduled guide brings a spotting scope, and with an extra bit of luck you might be there on the weekend when the bird banders are working the back. Groups are sure to get a bit of a "show and tell" from a local expert as a special treat when they are around.

Depending on the time of the year, this gem of a nature park located almost city center, can give you views of warblers, nuthatches, hummingbirds, sparrows, bluebirds, ducks and geese, Sandhill Cranes, hawks and eagles, to list a few among its list of almost 300 documented species. From various times that I have visited the RGNC I have some wonderful memories of owls in the nest, two Peregrines flying over the river, a Bald Eagle swooping the duck pond, and my first Green-tailed Towhee.

In just over an hour you can make the drive from the Rio Grande Nature Center east through the mountain pass and up the backside of the Sandia Mountains to the Crest. A winter day with clouds might not present you with the spectacular view, but there is something that will set your heart a-flutter.

On Sunday mornings from mid-November through March the bird banders head up to the Sandia Crest House Gift Shop to set up a banding station on the patio.

Visitors are treated to a warm and toasty indoor front row seat as birds flock onto the patio observation deck of the Crest House. Birds are trapped in an electronically-controlled trap, then fetched inside for weighing, measuring, banding, and photo ops.

Resident banders are extremely knowledgeable about the birds and perfectly willing to spend time giving details and explanations to increase the listeners' knowledge about the wonders of these feathered jewels.



*Photo 2010 by V. Sims*



The star attractions at the winter banding sessions on Sandia Crest are the three species of rosy-finches. The setting offers premier viewing of the finches as they flock to the bare branches of near-by trees or the lush mountain pines. The birds move right up onto the deck just in front of the huge plate glass windows for constant viewing entertainment. It is very exciting to be part of the banding scene at the Crest House. When Billie and I visited they brought in a bird that had been banded the first year that the rosy-finch banding project had begun. It is incredible to know that this bird had flown from the Arctic to winter in New Mexico for at least seven years as of that season.



*Photo by Charlie Thomas, "taking measurements"*

The citizen-science banding project on Sandia Crest was begun through the efforts of teenage bird watching enthusiasts, Ryan Beaulieu and Raymond VanBuskirk. A tragic car accident took the life of Ryan; Raymond survived the crash and now continues the project with another friend, Michael Hilchey. With guidance from Steve Cox, a research coordinator for Rio Grande Bird Research Inc., a citizen science program that gathers data on area birds and submits it to the U.S. Geological Survey's banding laboratory and to N.M. Dept. of Game and Fish, the banders continue to gather data at the Crest.

To read more about the incredible efforts of these teenagers and the spectacular rosy-finches please **archive the wonderful article written in the Audubon magazine May-June 2010**. There is also a rosy-finch web site.

<http://rosyfinch.com/rosy.html>

Ryan Beaulieu was a beloved member of New Mexico bird watching comrades. His memory lives on in this project and through the Ryan Memorial Scholarship. Read Ryan's memorial website and his writings by going to...

<http://rosyfinch.com/RyanBeaulieu.html>

A two-hour non-stop flight carries you from Houston to New Mexico. Considering the incredible distances the tiny rosy-finches and the gangling Sandhill Cranes travel, our journey is a breeze. Sandhill Cranes, wonderful duck ponds, and beautiful bosque birds can all be found without leaving Albuquerque. If you have the time you can take an additional journey to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, located about two hours south of Albuquerque.



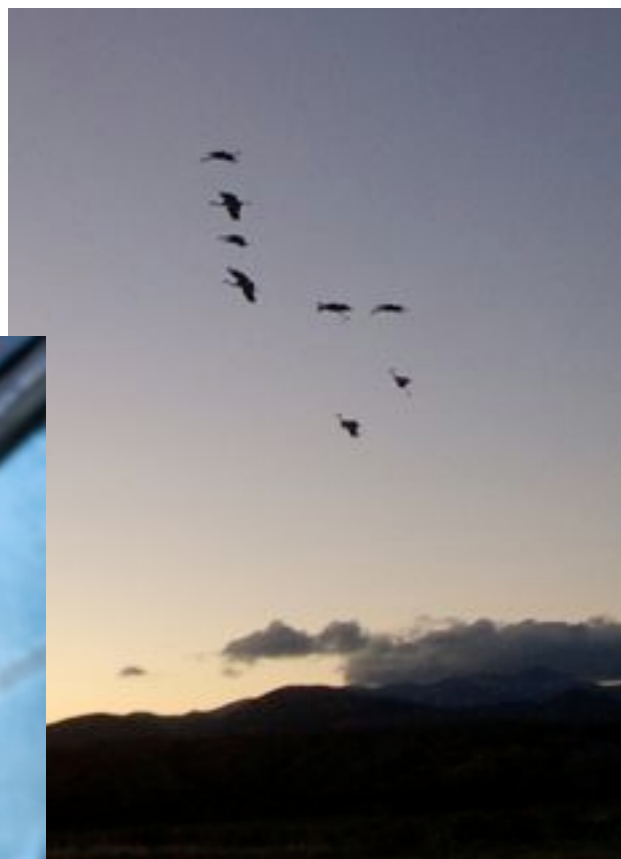
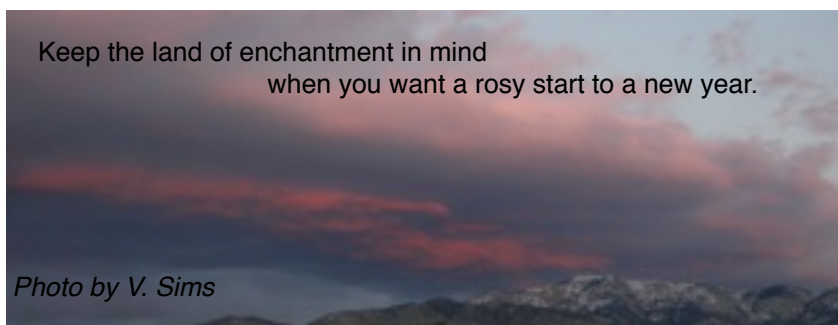
*Brown-capped rosy-finch  
photo by Charlie Thomas*



My most recent trip to the BDA in January 2012 was hampered by strong winds, but two moments made the journey stand out. Driving the road heading into the NWR brings you to a series of ponds with pull over spots just to the west of the road. Birders stop at each pond to scope the waterfowl. On this trip I was watching a Harrier on the ground while it consumed lunch. All of a sudden a ruckus of crows caused me to look up as a Golden Eagle swooped in and landed across the pond from me. What a thrill to have a long look at the Golden Eagle!

Sunset provided the second treat of the day as folks gathered again at these ponds for the sundown entertainment of the Sandhill Cranes cruising in with a beautiful sunset backdrop. The cranes glide into these ponds to spend the night trying to avoid predators by standing in the water. It is a sure bet to draw a nice viewing crowd enjoying and photographing the site, being surrounded by the wonderful crane cacophony and the buzz of comradery among the delighted bird watchers.

One other picture perfect moment is set in my New Mexico memory bank for the folks looking for a fabulous Sandhill Crane photograph. I remember sitting looking over Caballo Lake at sunset. The mountains across the lake to the east were catching that beautiful rose colored glow, the sky was stunning and then it filled with cranes calling as they flew north to those Bosque ponds. I've always wished that I had a camera to capture that rosy moment.



*Photo 2012 by V. Sims*



*Black rosy-finch photo by Charlie Thomas*

## Rainbow of Birding opportunities in Texas

One can never predict the course of the spring winds, rains, storms, or droughts. Texas offers bird watchers a variety of opportunities to shift with the conditions and always find marvelous areas to seek out a wonderful birding adventure.

When birding is slow at High Island take a little trip with the Tropical Birding group to discover the rice field roads around Winnie and “chill out” at the DQ.

When birding is slow in our area take a little trip to the west; head to Warbler Woods near San Marcos and discover this oasis for first class birding while sitting on their observation deck at their incredible pond. Overnight it and then head further west to the Kerr Wildlife Management Area and find the Hill Country classics, the Golden Cheeked Warbler and the endangered Black-capped Vireo.

The Black-capped Vireo arrives on Texas breeding grounds from mid-March to mid-April. This bird is considered to be something of a Texas specialty and nests along the Edwards Plateau and the Big Bend Region. It is also found to nest in limited areas of Oklahoma and in northern Mexico.

Kerr Wildlife Management Area, 2625 FM 1340 in Hunt. Free

Open year-round during daylight hours; office open 8a.m. - 5p.m. Monday-Friday

TO GIVE A HOOT is thought to have evolved from the phrase “I don’t care a hooter for him” (hooter meaning an iota or whit).

April and May Spoonbill Issues  
looking for YOU to share a  
favorite Texas birding opportunity that  
might inspire our group members to keep their  
binoculars out over the summer.

**Send in your spots !**

LADY BIRD JOHNSON, whose real first name was Claudia, got her lifelong nickname as an infant when her nurse declared that she was as “purty as a ladybird.” The reference wasn’t actually to a bird but to the brightly colored beetle more commonly called a ladybug.



White-tailed Kite, San Bernard NWR, 12/01/11

**Ornithology Group Houston Outdoor Nature Club**

**Minutes of Meeting Monday, February 6, 2012**

**Bayland Community Center Number of attendees: 66**

**1. Learning Corner: Birding Brazos Bend State Park** was presented by *Bill Godley*. Photos were by *Greg Lavaty*. Bill talked about the history of Brazos Bend State Park. Coastal Indians were there before 1851. It was a Stephen F. Austin grant in 1827. A Riverboat Landing was located there in 1845, with cotton and rattan furniture being shipped. The trails were created during the time period of the Hale Ranch which was there in 1920. Texas Parks and Wildlife owned the place in 1976. Brazos Bend State Park opened in 1984 (being delayed opening by Hurricane Alicia's 115 mph winds impacting other State Parks).

Jim Morgan and Ted Eubanks did the first bird census four years prior to the opening of the park. They counted 270 species of birds. The total of bird species now is 310. This past Christmas Bird Count of 2011 totaled 158 species.

Some of the special birds seen at Brazos Bend State Park have included:

- a) Ringed Kingfisher 1980's
- b) Masked Duck 1995-1997
- c) Whooping Crane 1996 on Baird Road
- d) Streaked-backed Oriole 2004-2005

On the North East end of the park at Sawmill Road, there are nine miles of trails for horseback riding. Forty Acre Lake was dug out and the fill was used to build the road. Hale Lake was the oxbow of Big Creek in former times. Waterfowl like to hide in Old Horseshoe when there's enough water. Creekwood Lake is an oxbow lake. In total, there are eight lakes at Brazos Bend State Park.

The Falcate Orangetip Butterfly flies along the Red Buckeye Trail around April 1<sup>st</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup>. Royal River Cruiser Dragonflies, Golden Silk Spiders and American Alligators can all be found at Brazos Bend State Park.

The best birding locations can be found at:

- a) 40 Acre Lake
- b) Elm Lake
- c) Pilant Lake
- d) Pilant Slough
- e) Creekfield Lake
- f) Old Horseshoe Lake
- g) Hale Lake (Painted Buntings and Spring breeding birds)
- h) Red Buckeye Trail (Falcate Orangetip Butterfly)
- i) Hoots Hollow Trail
- j) All Prairies
- k) Davis Estates (Private) 3,200 Acres

For further information check: [www.brazosbend.org](http://www.brazosbend.org)

**2. Sightings:** Hummingbirds: Calliope, Rufous, Buff-bellied, & Anna's; Nelson's Sparrow at Baytown Nature Center; Horned Grebe at Tri City Beach; Common Goldeneye; Bufflehead; Common Loon; Short-eared Owl on Hebert Road, Katy Prairie; Reddish Egret on the North side of Lynchburg Road; 3 Bald Eagles, a Peregrine Falcon, and a Wilson's Warbler at El Franco Lee Park; Great Horned Owls at Galveston Island State Park; Blue-headed Vireo at Russ Pittman Park; Summer Tanager at Brazos Bend State Park.

**3. Minutes:** No comments.

**4. Library:** Free puzzle of state birds. See Debbie.

**5. Treasurer's Report:** \$8,740.00 as stated by Harlan Evans.

**6. Membership:** Dues are due for 2012!!!

**7. The Spoonbill:** Vicki Sims stated that two people offered to do proofreading. "Thanks!!" Printed newsletter is on the back table.



**8. Announcements:** A special presentation was made to *Al Schultz* for being editor of The Spoonbill from January 2004 to May 2011. Many thanks, Al!!! Your work was really appreciated!! Feb 23-26 is the Whooping Crane Festival; March 3<sup>rd</sup> is Jessie Jones Nature Fest.

Contact Marcy Brown if you can help at the booth the OG will have up at this Nature Fest.\*\*\*

**9. Past Field Trips:** Adam Wood stated that the Quarterly Field Trip was rained out!!

**10. Future Field Trips:** Meet February 18, 2012; 8am; at Huntsville State Park.

They will look for White-breasted Nuthatch; Sparrows; wintering songbirds; Common Pacific Loons; & Lesser Black-backed Gulls. The Idaho trip still has 4 available spaces.

February 15<sup>th</sup> is the deadline to sign up. They hope to see 7 to 8 species of Owls.

## **11. Program: Birds and Bottomlands of the Neches River Basin**

was presented by *Gina Donovan*. An interesting fact is that Bolivar Peninsula's fresh water is from the Neches River. Canoeing and Birding have now replaced Fishing and Hunting as the top two pastimes.

Two thousand birds per square mile winter along the Neches River (as per Bob Parvin, TPWD). The Neches River Corridor has 300 bird species and 200 tree species.

The Neches River Rendezvous was created to connect people with nature. It is held on the first Saturday in June. Participation is capped at a limit of 300.

A photo was shown of the Duncan Ferry crossing the Neches River. Bonnie and Clyde were standing on the Ferry with their automobile, while fleeing from the law.

Davy Crockett National Forest has a 20 mile long hiking trail called the 4 C Hiking Trail. Another interesting point is the Neches River Rendezvous Trail on Hwy. 7.

Martin Dies Jr. State Park is the best place for birding. However, it could be under water sometime in the future, if a reservoir is put in. The Neches River needs to be designated a National Wild and Scenic River which would give it Federal Protection.

Gina Donovan and her father, Richard M. Donovan, both have written books about the Neches River. Royalties from sales of both of these books go to the Texas Conservation Alliance to continue protecting the Neches River. These books are:

- ***Neches River User Guide*** by *Gina Donovan*
- ***Paddling the Wild Neches*** by *Richard M. Donovan*, TX A&M Nature Series.

For further information, contact: [www.houstonaudubon.org](http://www.houstonaudubon.org)

*Marie Asscherick/Ornithology Group Secretary*





## About the Ornithology Group

The Ornithology Group (OG) is a division of the Outdoor Nature Club (ONC), a non-profit organization dedicated to greater knowledge about the environment and wildlife of the Upper Texas Coast. The OG is a club of individuals interested in all aspects of birding, including bird identification, listing bird sightings, competing in birding events, and preserving bird habitat. Some members study bird behavior, biology, distribution and migration, while others just enjoy watching birds. The organization is designed to accommodate these diverse birding interests. Monthly meetings and field trips provide an opportunity to interact with and learn from experts in local and international birding.

Chair:	Marcy Brown	713-664-5206	<a href="mailto:marcydbrown@gmail.com">marcydbrown@gmail.com</a>
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Vice-Chair Asst:	Stennie Meadors		<a href="mailto:stenmead@aol.com">stenmead@aol.com</a>
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<b>The Spoonbill:</b>	Vicki Sims	713-779-7609	<a href="mailto:oncspoon@gmail.com">oncspoon@gmail.com</a>

OG website: <http://www.ornithologygroup.org/>  
ONC website: <http://www.outdoornatureclub.org/>

### TO START OR RENEW A MEMBERSHIP:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Family</b>
ONC Annual Dues:	\$ 8.00	\$ 15.00
OG Annual Dues:	\$ 14.00	\$ 19.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ 22.00</b>	<b>\$ 34.00</b>

Additional contributions are welcome in any amount.

Send to:

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<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 18.00</b>	<b>\$ 30.00</b>

Membership questions  
Contact Margret Simmons  
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