



The Spoonbill

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

November 2012
Vol. 61 No. 10

Monthly Meeting Monday, November 5th

Join us for the
Ducky Details

Bayland Community Center
6400 Bissonnet, Houston

LEARNING CORNER - 6:30 P.M.
GENERAL MEETING - 7:00 P.M.
PROGRAM - 7:30 P.M.

November Program by Greg Green of Ducks Unlimited “Winter Waterfowl Trends in Texas”

UPCOMING ORNITHOLOGY GROUP PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Dec 3, 2012 –
Felipe Chavez-Ramirez, PhD, Dir.
of Conservation Programs,
Gulf Coast Bird Observatory,
“Cranes”

Jan 7, 2013 –
Susan Heath, GCBO,
“American Oystercatcher
Stewardship in Texas”

Feb 4, 2013 –
Kendra Kocab, Staff Naturalist,
Kleb Woods Nature Sanctuary
“Picture This: Digital
details.” [about the struggles of
online bird identification.]

GOING NORTH?

OUTDOOR NATURE CLUB
Little Thicket Nature
Sanctuary
November 17 - 18
Visitors Weekend

GOING SOUTH?

O.G. FIELD TRIP
Quintana & Freeport
Area Field Trip
November 17th
Mike Austin Leader

**DON'T LET NOVEMBER
FLY BY YOU!**

FIELD TRIPS STILL LACKING COORDINATORS

Below are the field trips still lacking coordinators. To make these field trips successful, we need OG members to volunteer their support. Please contact Adam Wood if you can lend a hand and keep these great places on the schedule.

| | | |
|-----------|--|-----|
| 2/16/2013 | Angelina NF & Boykin Springs (Bachman's Sparrow) | TBD |
| 3/16/2013 | Fermosa Tejano Wetlands/Lake Texana | TBD |
| 5/20/2013 | Sam Houston NF (Breeding Warblers) | TBD |

Quintana & Freeport Area Field Trip Announcement

November 17, 2012

Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary Parking Lot

8:00 AM

This month's trip will be to the Quintana and Freeport area. Michael Austin, who is one of the compilers for the Freeport CBC, will be the leader for this trip. He is one of the best birders in the state and has an amazing ear for birds. If there is a good bird nearby he will find it and know what it is. The goal for this trip will be mostly to seek out the winter residents of the area like shorebirds, gulls, and terns on the beach and sparrows in the woodlots. Any lingering transient neotropical migrants as well as any odd hummingbirds will also be sought out during this trip. Some of the better birds that have been found in this area in the past have been all three scoters, Northern Gannet, Horned Grebe, Red-necked Phalarope, Glaucous gull, Lesser Black-backed gull, Anna's hummingbird, and Clay-colored sparrow. Last year during the western invasion, which could occur again this year, a Green-tailed towhee was also found.

The plan is to bird until lunch and have a picnic lunch at the sanctuary since there are limited establishments in this area. Those wishing to stay and bird in the afternoon will need to bring a picnic lunch. Depending on the group desire and what was seen in the morning there is an option of either going to Brazoria NWR or west Galveston Island for the afternoon. Anyone who has a walkie-talkie would be welcome to bring it along so each vehicle can communicate with the others in a "car parade", for example on Bryan Beach. Mosquito spray is always vital, even in "winter". This should be a great trip with great weather and the potential for some really neat birds that you will not want to miss. So come out and join us for a nice fall day of birding on the coast. No sign-ups required just show up ready to help spot good birds and to have an enjoyable day.

Directions: Take SH 288 south out of Houston and through Lake Jackson where SH 288 merges with SH 332. Just north of Freeport SH 332 East splits from SH 288 South. Stay on SH 288 South through the west side of Freeport to where it merges with SH 36. Take SH 288/ SH 36 east to FM 1495. Turn left (south) on FM 1495 and take FM 1495 south to CR 732. At CR 732 turn left (east) to get to the sanctuary. The sanctuary parking lot is on the left side of CR 732 - just after the CR 732 intersection with 8th Street.

~Adam Wood, OG Field Trip Coordinator, birdsondabrain@earthlink.net, 713-515-1692

October OG Field Trip Report: by Sandra Moore

A group of seventeen birders met up with Stephan Lorenze on Sat, Oct 20.12 at Boy Scout Woods (BSW). Things were very slow there, although Stephan found TWO Barn Owls that several of us got to see. Smiles grew at Smith Oaks (SO) when he found a Red-breasted nuthatch and got everyone on it. There were several warbler species as well. We were smiling large at Rollover Pass(RP) and at the North Jetty(NJ) where there were many Franklin Gulls. Two stars at the jetty were a lone Snowy Plover and a lone Red Knot..thanks to the great eyes of Stephan and Mark M. Teddy was our scribe and she was terrific. A quick run to Bolivar Flats looked like the jetty would be more productive. Most were able to see the Barn Owl on Retillon Rd.

Over half the group made it, independently to Laffite's Cove. We were giddy with delight as the Red-naped Sapsucker put on a fabulous show at the main drip. He was joined by a female Summer Tanager in her resplendent glory. Warblers were present as well!!!! There was really no end to the birding day as those spunky birds were flying around until dark took over and it was no longer possible to see.

Below is the list of what we saw on the "official" part of the outing:

Nashville Warbler BS
Barn Owl BS, Retillon
Sharp shin Hawk BS
Hermit Thrush BS
Black and White Warbler BS
American Redstart m&f BS &SO
Tree Swallow BS
Rough-wing Swallow BS
Barn Swallow BS
Red-breasted Nuthatch BS(heard)
Catbird BS
Brown Thrasher Heard BS SO
White-eyed Vireo BS SO
Indigo Bunting heard BS
Ruby-crowned Kinglet BS SO
Orange-crowned Warbler BS
Black-throated Green Warbler SO
Northern Parula SO
Red-bellied Woodpecker SO
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher SO
Franklin's Gull RP NJ
Short-billed Dowitcher RP NJ
Dunlin RP NJ
Willet RP NJ
Ruddy Turnstone RP NJ
Piping plover RP
Semipalmated Plover RP
Snowy Plover NJ
Black-bellied Plover RP NJ
Sandwich Tern RP
Royal Tern RP
Red Knot NJ
White morph Reddish Egret and Reddish Egret RP
Snowy Egret RP NJ
Ring-billed gull RP
Avocets NJ RP
Least Sandpiper RP
Western Sandpiper RP NJ
Spotted Sandpiper RP



Black-bellied Plover, Galveston East Beach, 8/9/12

Photo by Harlan Evans

**BIRDERS WHO JOINED THE
SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER
FIELD TRIPS SEND THEIR
GRATITUDE TO MARCY AND
SANDRA FOR
VOLUNTEERING TO
COORDINATE THESE TRIPS!**

TEXAS PRAIRIE LAND IN THE NEWS

Hope the October Katy Prairie Bash was a huge success! JoAnn Raine has sent in this wonderful link that will make you want to take a SuperSize of Dr. Pepper.

Here's a link to an interesting article, "Dr. Pepper Invests \$1.1 million to Save Prairies" (in Texas).

<http://revmodo.com/2012/08/08/dr-pepper-invests-1-1-million-to-save-prairies/>

NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION IN THE NEWS

The October/November issue of the National Wildlife Magazine reports a win for wildlife as Congress passed the RESTORE Act this past June. The legislation dedicates billions of dollars in fines from the Gulf oil disaster to restoring the region's communities and habitats. The article urges you to learn about NWF's work to restore Gulf Coast habitats. Via the internet: www.nwf.org/restoration



Ring-necked Duck, Hermann Park 2/16/12

Photo by Harlan Evans

2013 FEDERAL DUCK STAMP IN THE NEWS

The winner of the Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest has been announced by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Deputy Director Rowan Gould. This is the only juried art competition sponsored by the federal government. The winner named is Robert Steiner, his painting of a Common Goldeneye will appear on the 2013-2014 Federal Duck Stamp which will go on sale in June 2013. Proceeds from the sale of the Duck Stamp is invested in efforts of conservation and protection of our wetland habitats.

Birders who are holders of a valid Duck Stamp are admitted free to the NWR's.

The OG Takes on Idaho!

by Steve Gross

During the early days of June, the birding, scenery, and weather in Idaho can be spectacular. Seven adventurous birders joined me for eight days of travel through the southern tier of a state that many have never seen.

After the group assembled at the Comfort Suites Airport in Boise, and after a great dinner at Brick Oven Bistro, we drove through town and then did our first birding at Foote Park, which overlooks Lucky Peak Reservoir. Loads of Western Tanagers greeted us, and though we weren't successful in finding the Long-eared Owl rumored to be there, we did enjoy the site. Western Wood-pewee, Spotted Towhee, and Yellow-breasted Chat filled out the bird list from that day.

Early Sunday morning, we make the long, yet scenic, trek north to the McCall area. A trip of about 100 miles each way. The weather was chilly, and the gently falling snow softened the morning sounds. Not much was singing at first, but before the morning was over, we'd seen Cassin's Vireo (a lifer for many), Townsend's Warbler, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Gray and Stellar's Jays, Evening Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, and Pygmy Nuthatch (a pair was found entering its cavity in an aspen in the parking lot of our lunch spot, Lardo's Restaurant).

The trip back to Boise offered a chance for Bobolink. The grassy fields near Garden Valley played host to several pair, and a long-sought lifer was ticked by Fred Campbell! Congrats, Fred.

Monday was to be a long day, so we left early for The World Center for Birds of Prey, where Chukar was our main target. We did not see this partridge the first time through the property, but a second visit later in the morning proved successful. From the World Center, we proceeded south to the Snake River Birds of Prey Area, which is worth the trip even if you don't see a single bird. We did see some birds, however, including Prairie Falcon, Short-eared Owl (several), Burrowing Owl, Sage Thrasher, and Sage Sparrow. Brewer's Sparrow, though heard, proved elusive for those who wanted a look. In fact, the Brewer's was the last bird we saw on the tour, after many aural encounters throughout the week.

Idaho City, our next destination, was 40 miles up Mores Creek, in the Boise Mountains. Our hostess, Jennifer Alban, had become well-known in Idaho birding circles over the last several years, due to the presence of White-headed Woodpeckers at her feeders. During our relaxed and productive visit, we also saw Evening Grosbeak, Cassin's Sparrow, Stellar's Jay, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and many Calliope Hummingbirds. During lunch at Trudy's Restaurant, we found a pair Red-naped Sapsuckers flying in and out from a small grove of trees. After our meal, we found the cavity. During the nesting season, finding active cavities is not difficult, and we were able to enjoy many such encounters over the course of the week.

After Idaho City, we headed east toward Hailey and our hotel for that night. On the way, we stopped at Indian Creek, Mountain Home, and Little Camas Reservoirs, picking up several duck species, Willow Flycatcher, and Western Grebe.

The next stop, however, proved memorable. At first, not much was happening as we drove the van slowly up Cat Creek Road. Our luck changed when we found a badger on the road, the first that many group members had ever seen. Next, a small flock of songbirds captured our attention. Moving on, we stopped at a spot where I'd heard something. Nothing much was moving until Nancy saw a robin-sized bird

perched behind me. I didn't see it, but in short order, the same bird flew up the road toward us. LEWIS'S WOODPECKER! It perched, and we enjoyed scope and binocular views until the bird finally flew off. Imagine, White-headed and Lewis's Woodpeckers in the same day.

After a fantastic dinner at CK's restaurant in Hailey, we tried for some night birds. Though I'd had both during scouting days prior to the trip, we dipped that night on Great Horned Owl and Common Poorwill. Oh, well. If you don't go put, you'll never see those night birds. The group was tired as we drove back to Hailey, but undeterred in their desire to see more species.

After a quick drive through the Sun Valley area the next morning, we moved south and east. Silver Creek Preserve offered nice views of Bullock's Orioles, Yellow Warbler, and Willow Flycatcher.

A roadside mound of earth allowed us unobstructed views of Bank Swallows. Hundreds of swallows swirled around the mound, offering lifer looks for several group members. Bonus!

Craters of the Moon National Monument proved a very different topography as we passed the stark, jet-black, razor-sharp fields of lava. We saw very few birds, but there had been rumors of Pinyon Jay and Greater Sage-grouse in the area in preceding weeks. We did tick a Say's Phoebe at the Experimental Breeding Reactor site on the Idaho National Laboratory.

Market Lake Wildlife Management Area offers a bounty of marsh birds, including gulls, rails, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and lots of ducks and waders. One species that eluded us during the week was Black Tern; a surprise, but any birder knows that you don't see everything every time. We found a baby Great Horned Owl in the shelter-belt at the north end of the area.

Our home for the next three nights was Ashton, a town at the foot of an ancient caldera (which is a collapsed volcanic cone). The area between Ashton and West Yellowstone, MT offers some of the best birding in the western United States, in my opinion. Henry's Lake, Harriman State Park, Big Springs, Mesa Falls, and Sawtell Peak (you can drive to its 8600' summit most years) host a great variety of flora and fauna, including moose (we saw eight or nine), elk, deer, and lots of bird species. Red-necked Grebe, MacGillivray's Warbler, Mountain Bluebird, Northern Goshawk, California and Ring-billed Gull, American Dipper, and American Pipit (at the summit of Sawtell Peak) were in the offing over these days. Hairy Woodpecker, Veery, Dusky Flycatcher, and Orange-crowned Warbler were found just up the hill from Ashton, on the grade formed by the caldera.

In the interest of full disclosure, I should mention that our fearless and energetic group spent MANY hours searching in vain for Boreal and Great Gray Owls. We got out the door at 4 a.m. on Thursday, then went out again Thursday night after a long afternoon break and a great dinner at Boondocks in the scenic settlement of Shotgun. This was near our owling area, but it would be worth the trip under any circumstances. As it happens, I got news of a cooperative Great Gray in the area, but a week after we got back to Houston.

The drive south to Pocatello demanded a mop-up expedition to Market Lake. We were able to get great views of Virginia Rail and a fleeting look at Ring-necked Pheasant, birds that group members wanted to see.

Proceeding south, we had a great lunch at the North Highway Cafe in Idaho Falls. From there, we drove up the South Fork of the Snake to a boat ramp/campground where a good feeder setup had been in place the previous summer. The feeders were not there in numbers, but we did tick Broad-tailed Hummingbird for the trip.

On to Pocatello. The previous year, we'd had Pinyon Jays just a few minutes from the hotel, and this year showed us mixed results. We heard several jays, but didn't see any. We did return the next morning and saw about 15 of these nomadic creatures.

Friday evening, after a good rest break at the hotel and a great Mexican meal at Herradero, we drove up the hill to the Mink Creek Recreation Area. Our stops that evening proved very successful: Gray Flycatcher, Plumbeous Vireo, Green-tailed Towhee, Virginia's and Black-throated Gray Warblers, Fox Sparrow, Swainson's Thrush, and Hermit Thrush all were found right where we thought they'd be. Juniper Titmouse was our only real miss.

The real reason for our trip up Mink Creek was Flammulated Owl. We made the half-mile hike during the last of the daylight hours, then waited for dark. Over the next two-plus hours, we heard six Flammulated Owls and I whistled in two Northern Saw-whet Owls. We didn't see any owls, but saw-whet was a new species for me on the Flam trail, and all the birds were close, just unseen.

Saturday morning, we our drive back to Boise. Stops included Massacre Rocks State Park, Register Rock, the Snake River gorge in Twin Falls (including Evel Knievel's launch site), Malad Gorge State Park, and a return trip to Indian Creek Reservoir, where we all got great looks at Brewer's Sparrow.

In all, we had 178 species, more than I'd had with any other tour. The group members were great to be with, punctual, and willing to keep the odd hours that owling demands.

Steve Gross
President, Texas Ornithological Society
sgross77@comcast.net
www.surfbirds.com/blog/peregrinations
www.vinesleuth.com/uncorked

Perhaps the baby owl they saw looked something like this adorable one, photographed by New Mexico birder Allison Schacht-Rhodes, at the Rio Grande Nature Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



Photo by Allison Schacht-Rhodes

HOUSTON AUDUBON SOCIETY LISTING OF CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

San Bernard NWR (TXSB): Friday, December 14, 2012

Come join us on Friday, December 14th, 2012 for the 28th annual San Bernard NWR CBC. This unique count provides opportunities to bird areas of the refuge not normally open to the public, including a newly-acquired tract along the west end of CR306, the Bludworth tract along Cocklebur Slough (2003 acquisition) and the nearby McNeill tract which now boasts the official state champion Live Oak. Also open for counters is the state's Nannie Stringfellow Wildlife Management Area. We have rail buggy slots open for those hoping to see Yellow and possibly even Black Rails. This count also claims some of the best hospitality around with the refuge staff providing an air boat, rail buggy, and 4WD trucks. We will have our historic chefs, Ron Bisbee & Marty Cornell, heading up the team cooking the famous countdown dinner of seafood gumbo! Although this count still provides the small count atmosphere, it has plenty of big count diversity with 190 or more species most years. You can join us by contacting either of the co-compilers below or by showing up at the refuge headquarters on CR306 at 0630 hours the morning of December 14th. Contact the co-compilers Ron Weeks (ronweeks@sbcglobal.net or phone evenings 979-299-0066) and Jennifer Wilson (jennifer_wilson@fws.gov or phone daytime 979-964-4011) to sign up.

Armand Bayou Nature Center (TXAY): Saturday, December 15, 2012

Come for the birds, come for the fun, but just come! Volunteers are needed in the field and in backyards for Armand Bayou's Christmas Bird Count which includes areas of LaPorte, League City, Dickinson, Seabrook and Bacliff (and lots of places in between, see [map](#)), so we need your help. Last year we had a record 157 species, and could not have done it without our counters! Our unusual species included Fox Sparrow, Great Kiskadee, Green-tailed Towhee, Swainson's Hawk, Calliope Hummingbird, Nashville Warbler, Purple Finch, Dark-eyed Junco and more! We meet at 6:30 am at Armand Bayou Nature Center's auditorium and will have Tally Rally at a local restaurant afterwards. We will also be owling at ABNC (5:00 am-ish) Please contact Martha Hood at lazuli007@yahoo.com to register, get signed up for an area and for further details. Thank you!

Turkey Creek (TXTC): Saturday, December 15, 2012

This count in Hardin and Tyler Counties includes the Turkey Creek and Hickory Creek Savannah Units of the Big Thicket National Preserve. Meet at the Big Thicket Visitor Center on US69 at FM420, about 7 miles north of Kountze at 6:30 AM. Sponsored by the Big Thicket National Preserve. Contact John Whittle (johnawhittle@aol.com, 409-722-4193) for more information.

Freeport (TXFR): Sunday, December 16, 2012

The count is consistently one of the top ten in the country and finds the largest number of species of any on the Upper Texas Coast. Habitat includes seashore, barrier islands, prairie & woodland. The circle is divided into eight areas, each with its own leader & unique habitats. ([Count Circle Map](#)) For information & assignments, contact compiler Mike Austin (mj_eh@comcast.net).

Matagorda Co. - Mad Island Marsh (TXMM): Monday, December 17, 2012

Most of the count is on private land and participation in the CBC is the only way to gain access to some very productive wildlife lands. The diversity of the CBC is great and most sections have multiple exclusives. The CBC features extensive native grasslands, brushlands, floodplain forests, beaches and coastal marshes. We need skilled birders to scan for pelagics over the Gulf from land, skilled shorebirders to ride on boats to survey expansive mudflats and marshes of the delta of the Colorado River, and birders to survey narrow forest areas along the river for lingering neotrops. Contact compiler Brent Ortego, brentortego@hotmail.com, for count assignments. Resources: [Count circle map](#) (static image), [Interactive map](#) (Google Earth required).

Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR (TXAP): Wednesday, December 19, 2012

The Attwater CBC in Eagle Lake, TX will be held on Wednesday, December 19, 2012. This is a wonderful opportunity to bird the Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR. This CBC is open to all birders and is one of the highest inland CBCs for diversity in the country. If you are interested in participating, please contact me (Sumita Prasad) at sumita@alumni.utexas.net, 832-453-4374

Beech Creek (TXBE): Saturday, December 22, 2012

This count takes places in Tyler and Jasper Counties and includes Steinhagen Lake, the Beech Creek unit of Big Thicket National Preserve and Martin Dies State Park. Meet at the Corps of Engineers Picnic Area on FM92 immediately north of the intersection with FM1746 in Town Bluff at 6:30 AM. Sponsored by the Big Thicket National Preserve. Contact John Whittle (johnawhittle@aol.com, 409-722-4193) for more information.

Brazoria (TXBR): Saturday, December 29, 2012

Sponsored by the Brazosport Birders and Naturalists and the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, the Brazoria CBC (the center of the count circle is just north of Hwy. 35 about halfway between Angleton and West Columbia) includes Bar-X Ranch, Columbia Lake, Hudson Woods (USFWS), Brazoria Reservoir, Harris Reservoir, and southern Nash Ranch. ([Count Circle Map](#)). This count was done from 1984-1994 and revived by popular demand in Jan., 2010. Please contact compiler Tom Taroni (taronitom@gmail.com or 979-297-5563) for information. **Resources:** [Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges](#), [Cradle of Texas Chapter](#), [Brazoria County, of TX Master Naturalists](#).

Orange County (TXOC): Tuesday, January 1, 2013

Habitat covers marsh, woodlands, and the Cow Bayou watershed. Meet in Orange at 7:00 AM at the Service Station at the intersection of Highway 105 and FM 1442. All are invited, even if you are not an experienced birder or are only able to bird for part of the day. Feeder watchers are welcome to participate. Let us know in advance and we will find a suitable group for you to join. The more pairs of eyes in a group, the more birds will be seen. Contact Ken Sztraky (berrysheepfarm@att.net), telephone 409-385-2835, for more information.

Sea Rim State Park (TXSR): Thursday, January 3, 2013

This count in Jefferson County includes Sea Rim SP, Texas Point NWR, and parts of J.D. Murphree WMA and McFaddin NWR as well as the Sabine Pass area. Please contact us in advance, as most groups go directly to their assigned areas. Sponsored by **Golden Triangle Audubon Society**. Contact John Whittle (johnawhittle@aol.com, 409-722-4193) for details.



Le Conte's Sparrow, Katy Praire, 1/1/12

Photo by Harlan Evans

**THE COUNT THAT
KEEPS COUNTING
ON YOU!**

Ornithology Group Houston Outdoor Nature Club
Minutes of Meeting Monday, September 10, 2012
Bayland Community Center
Number of Attendees: 51

Learning Corner: Join the Flock, Follow the Mob was presented by **Stephan Lorenz**.

Nesting birds respond stronger with mobbing. Fledges respond even stronger with mobbing. Find the nest and go back every three days. Mobbing attacks happen a lot with hawks and predators. Cooper's Hawks attract mobbing. The clue is to look for a mixed species flock. Chickadees and Titmice are the boldest mobbers. Warblers stay at the fringes of the action. Robins give a "chink" alarm call. Look for mobbing of Great Gray Owls in Yosemite National Park. McGirt Meadow is a nice place to see birds. Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls are sometimes found by the mobbing of birds in the Rio Grande Valley. Spotted Owls (there are less than seven in Texas) are sometimes found by the mobbing of Chickadees in West Texas. Mobbing by birds is international. Watch for mobbing of the Barking Owl in Australia and the Ferocious Giant Eagle Owl in Africa.

Mobbing doesn't work well in the Neotropics. Find a local guide, buy them a beer, and ask where to find owls.

Boreal Owls can be seen relatively easily in August and September in certain places.

Predators are Blue Jays who eat eggs and fledglings; Snakes (if the flock is really low, the predator is probably a snake. Rat snakes in Texas are good tree climbers.); Bear (Big Bend); Mountain Lion (mobbed by Ravens in Southern California); Wolf (Ravens follow wolves.) Red Nuthatches can understand the calls of Black-capped Chickadees.

February to July is nesting time in our area.

Be patient; back up; scan a lot!!!

Recommended Reading: **What the Robin Knows: how birds reveal the secrets of the natural world** by **Jon Young**.

Sightings: Wood Storks at Brazoria NWR; Canada Warbler; 100 Anhingas at Brazos Bend State Park; Wood Storks at Anahuac; Least Bittern; Northern Parula at Brazos Bend State Park; 9 to 11 migrant warblers (Canada; Black and White; Swainson's); Chimney Swifts in Sugarland (2,920); Black-necked Grebe; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher; Brown Boobie by the Lynchburg Ferry. Orioles at the San Antonio Botanical Garden Bird Blind. **Minutes:** No comments. Contact Marie.

Library: Free books.

Treasurer's Report: Harlan Evans stated that the treasury has \$9,542.

Membership: Margret Simmons said to please sign in. Also, she will soon be collecting dues for next year.

The Spoonbill: Vicki Sims stated that today is the deadline for The Spoonbill. Thanks for sending information.

Announcements: The Botany Group will have a lecture on Native Plant Restoration by David Lowprice; LNTS will have black lights for Moths; the HummerBird Celebration is this weekend in Rockport, TX. Swift Night Out is Friday at LakeView, Old Town, Sugarland at 7:30pm. It is listed on Audubon and Nature Discovery websites. It is sponsored by Sugarland Whole Foods. Saturday is also the Hummingbird Celebration at Kleb Woods. On Saturday, October 20, Aransas NWR is celebrating their 75th anniversary. David Sibley is speaking at 1pm. Larry Dybala mentioned that Baltimore Orioles go to hummingbird feeders, but they need bigger holes. **Lunch with the birds** at Nature Discovery Center begins next week at noon. It will be Wednesday, September 19 through November 7th. Nina Rach mentioned that there are two openings for the pelagic trip on September 30th.

Past Field Trips: Chimney Swifts and Purple Martins (12); Green Herons and Shrikes.

Future Field Trips: Smith Point Hawk Watch. Meet at Anahuac NWR at 7:30am on Saturday, September 22. Field trip coordinator will be Marcy Brown.

Program:

Movement and Gene Flow throughout the Breeding Range of North America's Rarest Heron, the Reddish Egret presented by **Professor Clay Green**, Texas State University, San Marcos.

The Reddish Egret is threatened in Texas and Florida. Due to the Plume Trade, it was extirpated from Florida and didn't return until the 1930's and 1940's.

The Reddish Egret is usually on wind driven tidal flats. They have a low foraging efficiency with a lot of energy spent for not as much prey. It is a late breeder compared to other herons and egrets. In addition, it is the least studied heron in North America. It is a species of concern, state threatened. They have two to three chicks per nest.

Current Status:

Global: 3,000 breeding pairs

Texas: 900-950 breeding pairs

Louisiana: 60 breeding pairs

Florida: 100-150 breeding pairs

Mexico: 800-1000 breeding pairs

Florida Keys: 8 breeding pairs (historically there were hundreds)

The Western Range of the Reddish Egret has all dark morphs.

The Eastern Range is 85% white morphs.

Baja California birds have significantly different gene differentiation.

Texas birds do not have significantly different gene differentiation.

Dark and White color morphs can and do mate.

Banded birds give estimates of longevity and insight into movement.

Galveston Bay is a very important foraging area for Reddish Egrets. Banded birds have been seen in August, September, and October.

Dubbs and Rabbit Islands are easy to get on and off. (Baffin Bay and Port Mansfield)

One banded Baja California bird went to Puerto Vallarta. Another banded bird went to El Salvador. An additional bird went from Baffin Bay to Guatemala. A Baja California bird went to Tucson, Arizona. Transmitters are backpack style and cost \$3,000 each. They use solar powered batteries. Most of the birds were still alive after the first year and two months. They don't seem to be making it past their second year. Twenty one males and four females were banded. Males are venturing further away than females. One bird went from Baffin Bay to St. Joseph's Island in Florida. Another Reddish Egret went from Baffin Bay to Vera Cruz for six months. Another bird went to Choate Canyon. Most Reddish Egrets forage three to five kilometers from their natal nest.

Heading up the Texas coast to Galveston is an important strategy for juveniles. About half the birds head south and about half the birds don't leave the Laguna. Migratory movements are from October to December. In the second year, one third of the birds go to Mexico. Tampico is a migratory stopover. Adults tend to be faithful to their same breeding areas. Juveniles don't return to their birth colony to breed.

Life Span: 12-14 years if it reaches adulthood.

In Texas and the Bahamas, 85% of their diet is the Sheep head Minnow.

The bill color of the adult Reddish Egret is pink with a black tip.

The bill color of the juvenile is a drab black color and it has no breeding plumes.

In Texas, bands of Reddish Egrets are red and blue with white letters.

In Mexico, bands are green or yellow.

Bands cost \$1.50 per band.

Marie Asscherick/Ornithology Group Secretary

Ornithology Group Houston Outdoor Nature Club
Minutes of Meeting Monday, October 1, 2012
Bayland Community Center
Number of Attendees: 49

Learning Corner: Flycatchers was presented by **Glenn Olson**.

He stated that he sees more flycatchers in fall migration. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers are staging now. (He saw about 25 near Smith Point.)

Glenn said to choose one flycatcher and study all its field marks in all the various field guides. Know the call. One should learn that flycatcher really well and use it as a reference point to compare other flycatchers. Study the shapes, of all the Pewees. Check the range maps for all the Empidonax.

The Eastern Wood-Pewees are larger and slate grayish to blackish in color. They have NO eye-ring.

-The Empids are small and grayish to greenish in color.

-Vermilion Flycatchers have faint streaking on the breast.

-Say's Phoebe has no streaking on the breast. Immature males and adult females can be confused. Look at the size of the bird. The structure of the bird is different. Check the shape of the head, the length of the tail and the bulk of the body. The Say's Phoebe has darker upper body parts.

Myiarchus Flycatchers have yellow on the breast and undertail coverts. One is more likely to see the Great Crested Flycatcher. It is usually in the tops of trees; sometimes it is in the mid-story canopy.

-Eastern Phoebes are usually found in a low area, such as on a fence. It likes to wag its tail and vocalize a lot.

-Western Kingbirds are grayish or greenish on the back with a yellow belly.

-Eastern Kingbirds have a dark back, light underneath, and have a white-tipped tail.

-Great Kiskadees have been found at Sheldon Lake and in Baytown.

-Scissor-tailed Flycatchers have a salmon pink color under the wings.

-Olive-sided Flycatchers migrate through here. (Quintana)

-Yellow-bellied Flycatchers look almost like a Pewee. However, it has a very distinct eye-ring. An Alder Flycatcher also has a distinct eye-ring. Yellow-bellied Flycatchers and Least Flycatchers sometimes call. Alder and Willow Flycatchers are similar and are usually separated by voice.

-Acadian Flycatchers breed here.

LOOK AT THE BILL!!!! The most important thing to look at on a bird is the bill. Look at the coloration of the lower mandible.

In a comparison of the Least Flycatcher versus the Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, look at the color pattern and contrast on the birds. The Least Flycatcher has an off-white underbelly with a higher contrast to the grayish brown mantle. It has more contrast between the wing and the back. The Yellow-bellied Flycatcher has a more yellowish greenish tone. It has yellow-green on the whole breast including the belly. The back is olive green or yellowish green. (Both flycatchers have eye-rings and similar wingbars.)

In order to learn the Flycatchers, go outside and look at the birds. It will take TIME, PATIENCE, and PRACTICE!!!

Sightings: Many species of Warblers including Yellow-throated Warbler; Tennessee Warbler; Chestnut-sided Warbler; Ovenbirds at Lafitte's Cove; a Great Horned Owl at Lafitte's Cove; Groove-billed Ani at Baytown Nature Center; White-tailed Kite and 3 babies 3miles east of Lafitte's Cove on Stewart Road; Hummingbirds are fighting over feeders; Ruby-throated Hummingbird; Rufous Hummingbird in Lake Jackson; 50 Wood Storks on the Katy Prairie; American Kestrel on Hawk Watch; Bald Eagle in Sugarland; Crested Caracaras on the way to Rockport; 3 Black Vultures and a Cooper's Hawk over Montrose; adult & immature Red-shouldered Hawk and a Red-tailed Hawk at Nature Discovery Center.

Minutes: Marie Asscherick said that the September minutes are not done yet.

Library: Debbie Valdez was not here today. Send her an email if you need a book.

Treasurer's Report: Harlan Evans stated that there is \$8,863 in the treasury.

Membership: Margret Simmons said, "Please sign in!" attendance records needed to continue to use the large conference room for our meetings.

The Spoonbill: Marcy Brown said, "Thanks to Vicki for a great job!" Vicki Sims said that the Deadline for The Spoonbill is still the 10th. She said that the future Spoonbill should have the Alaska articles and an Idaho trip report.

Announcements:

- The 11th Street walk isn't being done anymore.
- We need trip leaders for February, March, April, and May.
- Lost Pines Christmas Bird Count in Bastrop is December 28 and 29. Margie Crisp will have Bird Artwork and Journaling. It is organized around an event, unlike other Bird Counts.
- ONC Botany will meet Oct 9th with Dr. Larry Brown.
- Oct. 28th is Visitors Weekend at the ONC Sanctuary.
- Oct. 13th is a High Island Workday.
- Houston Audubon is having a No-Gala Gala. (Check their website.)
- Oct. 6th is the Master Gardener's Plant Sale, Campbell Hall, Red Bluff Rd., Pasadena. The sale starts at 9am. The lecture about the plants by Heidi Sheesley is at 8am.
- Russ Pittman Park's Lunch With the Birds is Wednesday at noon through November 7th. They will also have a Senior Members Field Trip to see a Prairie Habitat on Friday, October 12th. Contact Mary Ann Beauchemin for more information at mbeauch@naturediscoverycenter.org 713.667.6550

Past Field Trips: Smith Point & Environs. The trip started at Anahuac Visitor Center. They heard a White-eyed Vireo and a Carolina Wren. At the Smith Point Hawk Watch Tower, they saw a Swallow-tailed Kite; Broad-winged Hawks. They also saw Shorebirds, Terns, Oystercatchers, and Sandpipers. At Anahuac Refuge Skillern Tract, a Peregrine Falcon ate a black colored bird. There were lots of mosquitoes, a Wilson's Warbler, and a Kinglet at High Island.

Future Field Trips: Stephan Lorenz will be leading a Field Trip to High Island and Boliver Flats. Meet at the bleachers at Boy Scout Woods, High Island at 8:30am on Saturday, October 20th. BRING A SCOPE IF YOU HAVE ONE. There is no official lunch break, so BRING A LUNCH!!!

Program: BIRD-A-DAY was presented by Tad Finnell.

Bird-a-Day is a listing game that is often frustrating. The object is to see a bird a day for a year.

Each day of the year, look for a bird that is new to your BirdaDay list. When you pick that bird, you cannot use it for the rest of the year.

NEGATIVES:

- Time
- Money (transportation, lodging costs)
- Commitment

TACTICS AND STRATEGY:

- One must have a careful plan or method.
- You need a Checklist.
- Determine what birds you want to see at a particular time. (Use a Checklist of the Upper Texas Coast.)
- Do Seasonal Breakdowns. In the Summer (June, July, August), look for the 90 easy birds now. In Spring, do the migrating birds. Scarlet Tanagers are best listed in May. Thrush and Veery are best seen in the Spring. In the Winter (December, January, February), look for Hummingbirds, Shorebirds, Raptors, Canada Warbler, Black and White Warbler, Pine Siskin, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and especially Sparrows. January is a good month to go to the Valley for the unusual Mexican migrants. (You cannot list a Chicken; but you can use a Peacock.)

Bird-a-Day can involve a lot of traveling. In 2009, Tad Finnell did the following one way

trips:

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| 2.5—3 hour trips | 27 (Lake Jackson to Smith Point, for example) |
| 3+ hour trips | 21 |
| 6 hour trips | 16 (to the Valley) |
| 9 hour trips | 3 (to Big Bend) |

Some of the birds that Tad missed listing were the Veery and the Louisiana Waterthrush. He saw 425 species in the state.

If you miss a day, you're through with Bird-a-Day. You also need to write where you saw the bird.

Tad says that Bird-a-Day is well worth trying.

For more information go to BirdaDay.net

Marie Asscherick/Ornithology Group Secretary

SPOONBILL MOVING TO WEB VERSION ONLY

**THE DECEMBER NEWSLETTER WILL BE THE LAST PRINTED SPOONBILL.
PLEASE NOTIFY THE SPOONBILL EDITOR IF YOU KNOW OF ANYONE NOT ON
THE LISTSERV TO RECEIVE EMAILS OR NOT ABLE TO VIEW THE NEWSLETTER
ONLINE.**

Vicki Sims - 713-779-7609

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.

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|---------------------|------------------|--------------|------------------------------|
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OG website: <http://www.ornithologygroup.org/>

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

BE YOU FOCUSED ON THE TURKEY

WITH A FORK OR WITH BINOCULARS

HAVE A WONDERFUL DAY OF GIVING THANKS