

# The Spoonbill

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

February 2013  
Vol. 62 No. 2



## Ornithology Group Monthly Meeting

**MONDAY  
FEBRUARY 4th**

**Bayland Community Center  
6400 Bissonnett, Houston**

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

**Stephan Lorenz's will lead the learning corner with the topic  
"Female and Single?  
Some tips to identify hens (ducks) out of context!"**

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

**FEBRUARY EVENING PROGRAM  
7:30 P.M.**

**Kendra Kocab**

**"Picture This: Digital Details - The Struggles of Online Bird Identification."**

Kendra Kocab's program is called "Picture This: Digital details - the good, the bad, and the ugly of online bird identification." It will focus on the many opportunities and challenges encountered when identifying birds, especially possible rarities. A case in point is the recent addition of the Double-toothed Kite to the Texas bird list. Using examples from an article in Birding Magazine and photos from Kleb Woods, Kendra's program will illustrate challenges like photo quality, distortion, and getting only one view.

In addition the powers of persuasion and bias.

Kendra is a Staff Naturalist at Kleb Woods Nature Preserve in Tomball, Texas. She co-authored the second and third editions of the Checklist of the Birds of Kleb Woods with Fred Collins.

[http://www.harriscountytexas.gov/CmpDocuments/26/Bird%20Charts/Kleb%20Woods%20Bird%20Checklist\\_3rd%20Edition.pdf](http://www.harriscountytexas.gov/CmpDocuments/26/Bird%20Charts/Kleb%20Woods%20Bird%20Checklist_3rd%20Edition.pdf)

Kendra graduated from the University of Texas in 2006 with a B.S. in Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior.

2006-2007- Worked in Alaska as a Fisheries Observer, monitoring bycatch and the impact on marine life by commercial fishing vessels in the Bering Sea.

2007- Worked as a field assistant for a PhD student in Nicaragua, monitoring Striped Cuckoo parasitization of Rufous-and-White Wren nests

2008- Completed a Florida Scrub-Jay research internship in the Avian Ecology Lab at Archbold Biological Station (central Florida, NW of Lake Okeechobee). Her project: Effects of rank in a dominance hierarchy on the behavior of non-breeding Florida Scrub-jays (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*).

<http://www.archbold-station.org/station/html/research/avian/avianinternship.html>

# GOOD NEWS EVENTS

## DAVID HANSON SEES DOUBLE TOOTH KITE: FIRST TIME RECORD IN TEXAS

A subject referred to in Kendra Kocab's program bio:  
OG member JoAnn Raine shares this email of David's discovery of the Double Tooth Kite

David Hanson said in reply to Pat ODonnell...

Pat, the story of the Double-toothed Kite is a 7 week story. I took those pictures around 9:45 AM on the morning of May 4, 2011 at High Islands Boy Scout Woods. The bird was sitting on a grapevine right above the boardwalk where it joins to what they call the cathedral area. I was walking back towards the entrance when I looked up and saw this Hawk sitting there. I had only been birding about 2 years at that point and I honestly thought it was probably a Coopers Hawk because of the woods it was in and general size and shape. I stopped and took several photos and moved forward 3-4 times taking more shots and I was literally shooting almost straight up on the last ones. I walked on under the bird and stopped at the nearby photo blind and asked the two men inside if either of them wanted pictures of what I thought was a Coopers Hawk. One said yes and we stepped out of the blind and walked a few feet towards the bird and I stopped and pointed at it just in time for us to watch it jump and soar right over the photo blind. No pictures and a witness that at the time I did not know we needed and never found. That evening I sent a copy of it and a few other birds for ID help to a bird guide friend and got a very excited email from him the next morning wanting to know where I had photographed that bird. I told him and he asked if he could send a copy to someone for verification since he was sure it was a tropical species that should not be there. After 7 weeks and two tries and still no answer I started looking for help elsewhere. I came across the VIREO web site and sent a copy to them on the weekend. Monday morning I received a very excited email from a gentleman there who said he was not the Hawk expert but was 99% sure it was a Double-toothed Kite that should not have been anywhere near there. The next morning another email came to me saying it indeed was that species and it was an incredible find since one had never been seen in North America. I sent copies of those emails to the Houston Audubon since it was there property and that started the excitement all over. I was then contacted by Eric Carpenter, of the TBRC. A couple of days later Martin Reid, of the TBRC, contacted me and he and I went to High Island to take perch verification pictures. With our laptop with the bird photos on it there was no problem matching where the bird was sitting. It turned out to be a good thing we got them because the drought of 2011 killed a couple of trees and some of the vines and they came down later that summer or fall. So that was the 7 week story.

## New FaceBook group started by David Sarkozi called Birding Apps

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/351866994920401/354381468002287/?notif\\_t=group\\_activity](https://www.facebook.com/groups/351866994920401/354381468002287/?notif_t=group_activity)

Recent comment by Ted Eubanks: I am surprised that more birders are not using the Ushahidi platform through Crowdmaps. We have started a bare-bones crowd map for the Caribbean, and so far I am impressed with the platform. I see much that can be done with this for birding. Here is a link to our rough beginnings.

<https://caribbeanbirdtrail.crowdmap.com/>

[Caribbean Bird Trail](#)

[caribbeanbirdtrail.crowdmap.com](https://caribbeanbirdtrail.crowdmap.com)

[Experience the Caribbean through the lives of birds](#)

# -WHAT IS IN FOCUS - FOR FEBRUARY AND BEYOND

## NATURE DISCOVERY CENTER

**Our last winter bird walk this season will be held on Feb 6<sup>th</sup>, again at noon.**  
Our weekly bird walks for spring migration will resume on Wed. Feb 27<sup>th</sup> at noon.

We are also inviting you to come join us for our Great Backyard Bird Count here at the Nature Discovery Center on **Saturday, Feb. 16, 2013** from **9:00 to 10:30 am**. Families are welcome. Registration is not required. We will meet at the front porch of the NDC as usual. This year bird watchers from around the world will take part in this annual event sometime between Friday, February 15, and Monday, February 18, 2013. Participants in the free event will join tens of thousands of volunteers of all levels of birding experience to count birds in their own backyards, local parks or wildlife refuges.

**The Laredo Birding Festival**  
**February 6th to the 9th**  
[www.laredobirdingfestival.com](http://www.laredobirdingfestival.com)

**The Great Backyard Bird Count**  
**February 15th - 18th**  
Hosted by Houston Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
counts are submitted online check H.A.S. website for details

**The Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary**  
**February 16th - 17th**  
**Visitors Weekend**

**The Whooping Crane Festival in Port Aransas**  
**February 21st to the 24th**  
**February 10th ends early registration.**

# BIRDING HOT SPOTS

## BIRDING HOT SPOT - VIA THE INTERNET -

Thank you JoAnn Raine for sending this great video of the jetty at Barnegat Lighthouse State Park and the wonderfully close seaducks. Knew you would enjoy the delights of bird watching via the video.

Lots of Common Eiders/Merganzers/  
Long Tails/Brants and Harlequins

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?  
v=K\\_Riq22U2ks](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_Riq22U2ks)

**View again in slow motion!**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?  
v=49F5f2bQXhI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49F5f2bQXhI)

## HOUSTON - THE EAGLE HAS LANDED -

### HERMANN PARK IN THE NEWS

**TWO ADULT EAGLES AND ONE JUVENILE HAVE  
FLOWN INTO THE LIMELIGHT, CAUSING A  
STIR WITH THEIR STAY IN THIS AREA**

CHECK OUT THE HEARTWARMING STORY OF THE YOUNG BOY, CONNOR, WHO FIRST SPOTTED THE EAGLES. INTERVIEWS WITH CONNOR CAN BE FOUND IN THE HOUSTON CRONICLE ARCHIVE AND ON THE CHANNEL 13 WEBSITE.

THESE EAGLES AND CONNOR ARE BRINGING A WHOLE NEW GENERATION OF HOUSTON SCHOOL KIDS TO THE PARK TO GO BIRDING.

Please see Eagles have landed in Hermann Park on Page A1 of Saturday, January 19, 2013 issue of Houston Chronicle

## January Brazos Bend State Park Field Trip Report

"A large group OG members showed up early on Saturday morning, January 19, and, in great weather, enjoyed the surroundings of Brazos Bend State Park and a great many bird species currently within the park. The morning was spent at 40 Acre Lake while the afternoon included Elm and Old Horseshoe Lakes. A few members event lasted to the "Bird Blizzard" at the 40A Lake tower and they were not disappointed. Perhaps a half million birds covered the skies over Pilant Lake before taking their nightly refuge in the Southern Wild Rice and areas close by.

In total, over 80 species were seen by the group including LeConte's Sparrow, Vermilion flycatcher, several American Bitterns, Sora, Couch's Kingbird, Red-headed Woodpecker, Hooded Merganser, and, late in the day, the elusive Cinnamon Teal. The "Bird Sightings" recorded for the full day (and dusk) are included in the website newsletter.

The park management, volunteers, and Bill Godley, thank you for your continued interest in the park. We hope that you join will join us again there in the near future."

### Blackbirds come to roost

Bill mentioned it has been ten years since the sight has been this spectacular, so it is well worth the experience and folks should try to make it out to Brazos Bend in order to see the this special event.

HOUSTON

AUDUBON

**FEBRUARY 28TH  
H.A.S. EVENING MEETING & SPEAKER EVENT  
BIRD CONSERVATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY  
BY  
RICHARD GIBBONS**

**Social at 7:00p.m. Meeting at 7:30p.m.  
United Way Center, 50 Waugh**

**VOLUNTEER  
WORK DAYS IN FEBRUARY:  
HIGH ISLAND SATURDAY FEB. 9th  
HORSESHOE MARSH FEB. 21st  
ELM SATURDAY FEB. 23rd**

**Monday February 4th**

**HOGG SANCTUARY BIRD SURVEY  
MONTHLY EVENT  
FIRST MONDAY 8:30 A.M.**

**CONTACT: AARON STOLEY**

**Saturday February 9th**

**ARMAND BAYOU SURVEY  
MONTHLY EVENT  
SECOND SATURDAY 8:00 A.M.**

**CONTACTS: ANDREW HAMLETT**

**Saturday February 9th**

**WOODLAND PARK BIRD WALK  
MONTHLY EVENT  
SECOND SATURDAY 7:30 A.M.**

**CONTACT: jason.bonilla@gmail.com**

**Monday February 11th**

**HERMANN PARK SURVEY  
MONTHLY EVENT  
SECOND MONDAY 8:00 A.M.**

**CONTACT: JIM WINN**

**Saturday February 16th**

**WILLOW WATERHOLE SURVEY  
MONTHLY EVENT  
THIRD SATURDAY 8:00 A.M.**

**CONTACTS: JOY HESTER / MARK MEYER**

**Thursday February 21st**

**BAYTOWN NATURE CENTER  
THIRD THURSDAY 8:00 A.M.**

**CONTACT: STENNIE MEADOURS  
AND DAVID HANSON**

**Sparrow I.D. Class with Glenn Olsen  
February 12 - 23, 2013**

**Check out the Houston Audubon Website  
for details on February events**

## Public Tours at Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR

There are now monthly tours offered at the **Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR** for those who are interested in seeing the Attwater's Prairie-Chicken, and learning more about native coastal prairie, one of our most endangered native habitats.

Tours are by reservation only, and are ***offered the first Saturday of each month, as well as every Saturday in April.*** This means that visitors now have 15 opportunities a year, in addition to the annual Prairie Chicken Festival in April, to gain access into the heart of the Attwater prairie and have a real opportunity to see one of North America's most endangered birds.

To reserve a spot on a tour, call the refuge at 979-234-3021 and ask for John or Steve. We will put your name on our list. We take visitors out in a large van, and can accommodate up to 14 passengers per tour. Tours last approximately 1.5 hours and begin promptly at 8:00 a.m., May through March, and at 7:00 a.m. in April.

Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge is located halfway between Sealy and Eagle Lake, Texas, off of FM 3013.

For more information, please contact the refuge staff.

### **Birds and Blooms Retreat at Camp Allen April 5 to April 7**

Calling all nature & bird lovers— this retreat is for you! Attend expert led sessions, hike scenic trails with experienced guides, Owl and Hawk Demonstrations, Audubon Presentations, Landscaping for Attracting Songbirds, Spring Migration Habits, Birding Identification, and Sunrise Bird Watching.

Per-person rates include hotel accommodations, meals, and programming. Horseback riding, canoeing, archery, and massages are available for an additional fee.

Retreat begins at 5pm Friday and concludes at 2pm Sunday.  
Retreat Rates: Single Occupancy: \$300.00, Double Occupancy: \$200.00.

**GALVESTON**  
**FeatherFest will be held April 12th to 14th**  
**SIGN UP ONLINE NOW**

# VOLUNTEERS ARE NECESSARY

## FOR CONTINUED SUCCESS OF THE ONC AND ORNITHOLOGY GROUP

IF YOU HAVE ENJOYED  
- THE FIELD TRIPS -  
- THE LIBRARY ACTIVITIES -  
- THE MONTHLY SPOONBILL NEWSLETTERS -  
THEN TO SEE THEM CONTINUE NEXT SEASON

**! VOLUNTEER !**

**LOOKING FOR  
YOU TO HELP**

### ***Seeking Librarian***

After 4 years of dedicated service as the OG Librarian, Debbie Valdez is ready to **close this chapter** and move on to other interests. Debbie has kept the OG books circulating, done book sale fund raisers, and just recently she has revised and updated the Library Web site.

***Volunteer needed to help us  
begin a new season.***

### ***Seeking Spoonbill Apprentice***

The Ornithology Group **will need** a new Spoonbill Editor next season. Learning in small easy steps would be the best way to tackle the transition and have fun along the way.

***Vicki Sims, Spoonbill Editor***

### ***Seeking help with web page design***

The board would love to ring in the new year with an updated version of the Ornithology Group web site as a goal. If you have the creative skills to help with this item on the wish list please ring up Nina Rach or March Brown.

**Ornithology Group Houston Outdoor Nature Club**  
**Minutes of Meeting Monday, January 7, 2013**  
**Bayland Community Center**  
**Number of Attendees: 56**

**Learning Corner: Birding the Galapagos** Presented by *Nina Rach*.

**Birding Galapagos: A Complete Guide to the Archipelagos Birdlife** by Hermann Heinzel and Barnaby Hall is a great book to read about the Galapagos. Also recommended is the book, **Galapagos Islands** by Julian Smith and Jean Brown.

The flight to Baltra takes two hours and costs about \$450.00. When the plane lands, Finches are everywhere!

The Pacific current up wells and brings in wildlife. The Equator cuts through the northern part of the Galapagos Islands. Magnificent and Great Frigatebirds, Nazca Booby (distinct from Masked Booby), Blue-footed Booby and Lava Gulls are there. The Blue-footed Booby chicks commit siblicide. Two eggs are laid by the parent and the stronger chick boots the other out of the nest.

Nina took the ferry to the Island of Santa Cruz. Puerto Ayora is the main town and Red Mangrove is a good place to stay. One can see Marine Iguanas, Sea Lions, Wandering Tattler, Galapagos Mockingbird (which doesn't sing!), Vermilion Flycatcher female, and White-cheeked Pintails.

Nina also sailed to Floreana (Charles) Island which is famous for the Post Office; San Cristobal (Chatham) Island; and Isabela Island (Albemarle). One can see Brown Noddy; Ground Finches which dig like chickens; the Ancestral Finch: Blue-back Grassquit; Sharp Beaked Ground Finch (also known as the Vampire Finch). Thirteen kinds of finches can be seen! All in all a fascinating trip!

**Sightings:** American Avocet; Short-eared Owl; Brown Creeper; Orange-faced Waxbills; Greater Peewee; Red Crossbill; Ferruginous Hawk; Sprague's Pipit; Tundra Swan at Anahuac inside the loop at Shoveler's Pond (shiny black legs); Pintails; and thousands of ducks and geese at Anahuac NWR; Calliope, Rufous, Allen's Hummingbirds are back at Russ Pittman Park, Blue-headed Vireo.

**Minutes:** Marie said that there is no news.

**Library:** No news.

**Treasurer's Report:**

**Membership:** Margaret said that it is time to pay dues for 2013. Please sign in tonight.

**The Spoonbill:** Vicki Sims bought envelopes and stamps. It cost \$36.13 to mail The Spoonbill for the month. It will cost around \$10.00 next month. Deadline for the next Spoonbill is the 15<sup>th</sup> of this month.

## **Announcements:**

**The Whooping Crane Festival in Port Aransas will be February 21 to 24.**  
**February 10 ends early registration!**

The Botany and Entomology group has already had their meeting this month. The Little Thicket Nature Center will have Open House and Cleanup on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of this month.

**Past Field Trips:** No comments.

**Future Field Trips:** The Quarterly Field Trip to Albuquerque and El Paso is Feb 15 to February 24th. Phone Adam Wood if you are interested in the trip.

Bill Godley mentioned the Field Trip to Brazos Bend State Park on Jan 19, 2013 on Saturday morning. The hike starts at 7:30am. For those who wish to stay late, they will meet at The Tower at 5pm to see the Blackbirds come to roost. Bill mentioned it has been ten years since the sight of the blackbirds has been this spectacular, so it is well worth the experience and folks should try to see this sometime whether going on the field trip or not.

Skip Almony said that the TOS has a photography field trip to BBSP on the same day.



# **Program: American Oystercatcher Stewardship in Texas**

## **presented by *Susan Heath*.**

There are eleven species of Oystercatcher worldwide.

American species are American Oystercatcher and Black Oystercatcher. The name oystercatcher was coined by Mark Catesby and replaced the name, "Sea Pie". Females are larger than the males.

The American Oystercatcher, *Haematopus palliatus*, is the most widely distributed of our oystercatcher species in the Western Hemisphere. Five subspecies are recognized. The total population is 43,000 individuals. There are 20,000 in the U.S.; 700 on the Gulf Coast (excluding Florida); 500 in Texas; and 150 in Louisiana.

### **Threats to the American Oystercatcher are as follows:**

**Low population size**

**Confined to the coastal zone**

**Low reproductive success (hatchling success is less than 50%; fledging success is less than 50%; adult survivorship is .50 to .90)**

**Delayed breeding (3+ years) Oystercatchers will live 10 to 15 years if they survive to adulthood.**

**Laughing Gulls eat chicks and eggs**

**Coyotes at nest**

**Opossums at nest**

**Over wash caused by high tides before a cold front**

**Starvation**

**Human Disturbance**

Color bands are put on chicks to follow chick movements. The plastic bands are checked on a weekly basis.

Oystercatchers are trapped by Whoosh Nets; Noose Carpets; and Box Traps. There is an AMOV Noose Trapping Video that shows the process.

The first nest was found in February. The last nest was found in June. The last chicks fledged in July and August. In 2011, 50% of the chicks fledged. In 2012, 12.35% of the chicks fledged.

Some of the Field Sites are Dickinson Bay/Moses Lake and Virginia Point/Swan Lake.

The New York City of Oystercatchers is Tiki Island and North Deer Island. There were 46 pairs in 2011 and 33 pairs in 2012. East Matagorda Bay had 19 pairs in 2011 and 10 pairs in 2012. In 2012, chicks did better on the larger islands, because there was not as much over wash.

The Oystercatcher is not a colonial waterbird, but they will nest pretty close to each other. Sometimes three chicks are fledged. The chicks will have black on the bill for at least a year. Eggs take 27 days to hatch. It takes 35-40 days until the chicks fledge.

Forty eight percent of the birds banded in 2011 were in the study areas in 2012. Seven of twenty one known pairs were in the same territory in 2012 (35%). Successful pairs are more likely to return to the same territory.

***Marie Asscherick/Ornithology Group Secretary***

## 2013 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

2013 Dues: ONC/OG dues are paid yearly on a calendar basis beginning January 1st. Life Members of ONC still need to pay yearly OG dues used to help pay for Spoonbill expenses, speakers and their travel, OG donations to other organizations, and other OG expenses. Pay by check at the next OG meeting or mail the form to submit updated information for the ONC Yearbook and database along with your check.

If you have questions about your membership status, contact Margret Simmons at [msimmons@compassnet.com](mailto:msimmons@compassnet.com) or 713-776-2511

**IF YOU ARE ATTENDING THE MEETINGS THEN YOU SHOULD BE PAYING YOUR DUES !**

## **FEBRUARY A FANTASTIC MONTH TO LOVE BIRDS AND BIRD WATCHING**

### **TO START OR RENEW A MEMBERSHIP:**

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

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

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

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

**CHECK BOX ONLY  
IF UNABLE TO VIEW  
THE NEWSLETTER  
ONLINE**

☐

	<i><b>Individual</b></i>	<i><b>Family</b></i>
ONC Annual Dues:	\$ 8.00	\$ 15.00
OG Annual Dues:	\$ 12.00	\$ 15.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ 20.00</b>	<b>\$ 30.00</b>

Additional contributions are welcome in any amount.

Send to:

Outdoor Nature Club  
PO Box 270894  
Houston, Tx. 77277-0894

*Membership questions?*

Contact Margret Simmons  
Phone 713-776-2511  
[msimmons@compassnet.com](mailto:msimmons@compassnet.com)