



*Photo by Harlan Evans*

# The Spoonbill

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

April 2013  
Vol. 62 No. 4

## April 1st Ornithology Group Monthly Meeting

Bayland Community Center  
6400 Bissonnett, Houston

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

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

**APRIL EVENING PROGRAM - 7:30 P.M.**

**Birding in Ecuador**

**By Tropical Birding's Andres Vasquez**

## **EXCITING NEWS for SATURDAY APRIL 20th**

### **- THE APRIL O.G. FIELD TRIP -**

Stephan Lorenz, who did such a wonderful job leading the OG October trip, has agreed to lead the OG field trip on Saturday April 20. Again it will be at High Island. This area may take up all of the time if migration is in full swing. Even if it isn't one of those famous fallout days we wait for it will be a wonderful trip with his expert and fun filled experience to guide us.

If time permits. and people desire, the group can then go to Bolivar or possibly do some inland shore birding around the Pear Orchard road area.

You will need your sunscreen, bug spray, water, and a hat. Remember to bring your lunch. The group can decide if it wants to eat at Boy Scout Woods or the picnic area at Smith Oaks. Looking forward to a wonderful day!!!

Sandra G Moore

**APRIL EVENING PROGRAM - 7:30 P.M.**

**Birding in Ecuador**

**By Tropical Birding's Andres Vasquez**

**A true treat is in store for us as we hear from this Ecuadorian bird guide on the exciting opportunities his homeland offers.**

**TRAVEL VIA THE INTERNET TO THE TROPICAL BIRDING WEB SITE TO CRUISE THROUGH ECUADOR AND ALL OF THEIR WIDE WORLD OF BIRDING OPPORTUNITIES**

HIGH ISLAND VOLUNTEERS  
HAVE BEEN HARD AT WORK

WORKING ON THEIR ACRES  
&  
PLANNING

RESULTS WILL EQUAL A GREAT  
2013 SEASON

**YES!!**

**GUIDES FROM TROPICAL BIRDING WILL BE RETURNING  
WITH DELIGHTFUL BIRD WALKS AND I.D. WORKSHOPS**

**WALKS WILL BEGIN ON -- FRIDAY MARCH 29... (no walk the 28th)**

**WALKS WILL BE ON THE DAYS THURSDAY THRU MONDAY**

**8 A.M. BOY SCOUT WOODS walk  
NOON: SHOREBIRD walk  
4 P.M. SMITH OAKS walk**

**AUDUBON SENIOR FIELD TRIP TO HIGH ISLAND AND BOLIVER IS THURSDAY MARCH 28TH**

# O.G. SPRING QUARTERLY FIELD TRIP

April 25 - April 28, 2013

## To the Lower Rio Grande Valley



This year's spring quarterly trip will be to the Lower Rio Grande Valley on April 25 – April 28, 2013. We will be birding locations across the LRGV from west to east from Salineno to South Padre Island looking for as many of the valley specialties as we can find. In addition to the valley specialties we will also be keeping our eyes and ears out for any of the neotropical migrants in the area. I am in the process of lining up a good local expert or two to be our guides during the weekend. The itinerary below is still being developed and is going to be flexible to allow for time to chase down any "Mega" rarity/vagrant from Mexico that gets reported while we are there. For now the itinerary is as follows:

- **April 26:** We will bird locations in Starr and Zapata Counties such as **Salineno, Chapeno, Falcon County Park, Falcon State Park, San Ygnacio** and the **Zapata Library**. The main targets will be muscovy duck, scaled quail, red-billed pigeon, brown jay (if they are being reported), chihuahuan raven, black-tailed gnatcatcher, clay-colored thrush, long-billed thrasher, olive sparrow, white-collared seedeater, pyrrhuloxia, and Audubon's oriole.
- **April 27:** We will bird locations in Hidalgo County such as **Bentsen State Park, Estero Llano Grande, Santa Ana NWR** and **Anzalduas County Park**. Target birds for the day will be least grebe, hook-billed kite (rare), gray hawk, zone-tailed hawk, plain chachalaca, white-tipped dove, green parakeet, red-crowned parrot, groove-billed ani, common pauraque, ringed kingfisher, green kingfisher, northern beardless-tyrannulet, brown-crested flycatcher, great kiskadee, tropical kingbird, Couch's kingbird, rose-throated becard (rare), green jay, clay-colored thrush, long-billed thrasher, tropical parula, olive sparrow, and Altamira oriole.
- **April 28:** We will bird locations in Cameron County primarily focusing on locations on South Padre Island such as the **Convention Center** and the **Valley Landfund Lots**. On our way out to South Padre Island we will bird along **Old Port Isabel Road**. Target birds for the day will be aplomado falcon, yellow-green vireo (rare), Cassin's sparrow and Botteri's Sparrow.

You will not want to miss this trip as it should be a great one. More details will be in the April Spoonbill so stay tuned. If you are interested in this trip please let me know and I will get your name on the list and get more details to you when I get them.

### **Accommodations & Directions: Coming Soon**

**Be sure to bring:** Binoculars, a warm coat or jacket in case it is cold, rain gear in case it rains, hat, sun block, camera, spotting scope, \$20 for admission fees and \$20 dollar donation to the OG, you can bring extra money for a tip for the guides if you wish, and water.

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

# - APRIL BIRDING FOOLS - GO MIGRATION CRAZY

## The Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary

April 6th - Feast Day

Morning Bird Walk

Noon Potluck Dinner

Afternoon Native Plants

It is also the date for the statewide Texas Trash-Off challenge so we will be cleaning our stretch of Hwy

## NATURE DISCOVER CENTER

### Lunch with the Birds:

Our weekly bird walks for spring migration noon and runs through May 8<sup>th</sup>.

### Springtime Early Evening Birdwalks:

Our early evening birdwalks will be held on Tuesday evenings starting April 2nd through May 7<sup>th</sup> from 6 pm until about 7:15 pm.

## GALVESTON

FeatherFest

April 12th - 14th

**SIGN UP ONLINE NOW**

## BALCONES SONGBIRD FESTIVAL

APRIL 26TH -29TH

Guided bird walks to identify the many species of birds in this region, including the golden-cheeked warbler and black-capped vireo. Free, fun family day on Sunday! Enjoy presentations, fun games and activities for kids.

This event is hosted with the Friends of Balcones Canyonlands Refuge. To register, visit [www.friendsofbalcones.org](http://www.friendsofbalcones.org)



**HOUSTON**

**High Island Open House  
Saturday, April 6th**

Everyone is invited to join H.A.S.  
at the High Island open house with free  
admission to all of the sanctuaries, it's a  
great way to introduce friends to birding

**AUDUBON**

**Monday April 1st**

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

**CONTACT: AARON STOLEY**

**Monday April 8th**

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

**CONTACT: JIM WINN**

**Saturday April 13th**

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

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

**Saturday April 13th**

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

**CONTACTS: ANDREW HAMLETT**

**Thursday April 18th**

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

**CONTACT: STENNIE MEADOURS  
AND DAVID HANSON**

**Saturday April 20th**

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

**CONTACTS: JOY HESTER / MARK MEYER**

**Check out the Houston Audubon Website for details on March and April events**

**Birds and Blooms Retreat at Camp Allen  
Friday April 5 thru Sunday 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 Rates: Single Occupancy: \$300.00 Double Occupancy: \$200.00**

**Retreat begins at 5pm Friday and concludes at 2pm Sunday**

**Ornithology Group Houston Outdoor Nature Club**  
**Minutes of Meeting Monday, March 4, 2013**  
**Bayland Community Center**  
**Number of Attendees: 54**

**Learning Corner:**

***“Caring About Birds and Birdwatchers—Why We Should Care About Birding Ethics”***  
presented by ***Winnie Burkett.***

**1. Promote the welfare of birds and their environment.**

Support the protection of important bird habitat.

Limit the use of recordings to attract birds. This can chase rare birds out of their territory.

They should be feeding their chicks, not looking for a recorded bird call.

Use artificial light sparingly for photography, especially for close-ups.

Keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, especially in beach nesting areas.

Try to use a blind and take advantage natural cover. If the bird knows you're there, then you are too close.

When adult birds fly away, tiny chicks are a mouthful for Gulls. It takes only five minutes in the sun for a chick to die.

Kayakers can scare adult birds away.

Stay on roads, trails, and paths. Keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.

**2. Respect the law and the rights of others.**

Do not enter private property w/o the owner's explicit permission.

**3. Ensure feeders and artificial bird environments are safe.**

Keep dispensers, water, and food clean and free of decay or disease.

Keep birds free of predation.

**4. Group birding. At Bolivar Flats, walk up by the grass in order not to disturb the birds. Try not to spook birds on the beach.**

Respect the interests of fellow birders. Share your knowledge and experience.

Be especially helpful to beginning birders.

If you witness unethical birding behavior, assess the situation and intervene if you think it prudent.

If the behavior continues, document it and notify appropriate individuals or organizations.

Group Leader Responsibilities. Teach through word and example.

Keep groups to a size that limits impact on the environment.

Ensure everyone in the group knows and practices this code.

Inform the group of any special circumstances (no tape recorders or laser pointers allowed)

Do not point a laser light at the bird; point it to a spot below the bird.

Professional tour companies bear a special responsibility to place the welfare of the birds ahead of the company's commercial interests.

Why should we care about Birding Ethics? Disturbance can cause a big impact.

Every time a bird flies, it uses energy. If too much energy is used, it can't fly north to migrate.

(Most rare birds have a bad compass and will never get home.)

**Sightings:** Bald Eagles in Pearland, Anahuac, El Franco Lee, 610 & TC Jester, and at NatureFest @ Jesse Jones Nature Center on Spring Creek; Long-eared Owl at Waco Tanks; Screech Owl; Red-shouldered Hawk nesting near Richmond; Say's Phoebe at El Franco Lee; Pine Siskins at Armand Bayou Nature Center; Yellow-rumped Warbler; Northern Parula at Brazos Bend State Park; Cedar Waxwings; Eastern Towhee at Sheldon Lake State Park; Mississippi Kite.

**Minutes:** See Marie.

**Library:** All the books are no longer being brought to the meeting. Look on the internet and request the book. It can be brought to the meeting.

**Treasurer's Report:** Harlan Evans stated that the treasury has \$9,721.00

**Membership:** Margret Simmons said to sign in and that almost everyone has paid their dues.

**The Spoonbill:** Vicki Sims stated that entries for The Spoonbill are due by March 13<sup>th</sup>. A new volunteer is needed to do the Spoonbill newsletter. May 2013 will be the last issue that Vicki will edit.

**Announcements:** Marcy Brown said thanks to Skip Almoney, Margaret Swarts, and Paul Downey for their help at Jesse Jones NatureFest.

**Past Field Trips:** Adam Wood stated that the Panhandle, El Paso, & Albuquerque Quarterly Trip from February 15 to the 24<sup>th</sup> was a success. They saw 158 species of birds, including American Tree Sparrow, Long-eared Owl, Eurasian Wigeon, and all three Rosy- Finches, Pygmy Nuthatch, Crissal Thrasher, Sage Thrasher, Rough-legged Hawk, Prairie Falcon, & Northern Shrike.

The Quarterly Trip on February 23, 2013 to Angelina NF and Boykin Springs produced Bachman's Sparrow and Brown-headed Nuthatches, but no Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

**Future Field Trips:** A Field Trip to the Birding Hot Spots of Jackson County will be held on March 16, 2013. It will be an all day field trip and will go to Bennett Park by Lake Texana. Meet at the viewing platform parking lot at TX 172.

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Quarterly Field Trip will be April 25-28, 2013. There is a possibility that the Flammulated Owl will still be there.

**Program: *The Incredible Adventure: Birding in Alaska*** was presented *by Skip Almoney.*

David Bradford was the planner and a birding guide. Brandon Percival was a birding guide who was fantastic at finding birds. Van Truan was a driver and a guide. There were 165 species of birds seen on this Alaskan birding trip in 2012. Skip made a Target Bird List of 20 birds that he wanted to see, but he saw 6 more than he had listed. Subway was the best place that they ate in Alaska. Some of the birding locations that the group visited are as follows: Anchorage Potters Marsh. Birds seen included Arctic Tern; Mew Gull; Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs; Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Kenai Peninsula—Homer.

At Copper Creek Camp Grounds a Common Merganser and Harlequin Ducks were seen.

Anchor Point included a Northwestern Crow facing off with a Bald Eagle.

Homer - Land's End Resort. Kachemak Bay piers float with the tide! Some birds seen included Pigeon Guillemot; Common Murre; White-winged Scoters; Yellow-billed Loon; Tufted Puffin; Surfbird; and a Sea Otter.

Kenai Peninsula—Seward. At the Bird Lady's Home (AVA) Pine Grosbeak and Common Redpoll were seen.

Mew Gull Rookery @ Chiswell Islands on the Kenai Peninsula was visited. At Resurrection Bay, Orcas, Harbor Seal, and Rhinoceros Auklet were seen and Horned Puffin was seen at Kenai Fjord.

From Anchorage they flew to Nome and went to the Nome-Kougarok Road where Red-throated Loon; Semipalmated Plover; Western White Butterfly (it takes 7 years to mature from a caterpillar!); Musk Oxen; Hoary Redpoll; Lapland Longspur; Rock Ptarmigan; and a caribou in a pickup truck were some of the sights seen.

From Nome, they went to the Teller and Savannah Highways where Tundra Swan and a Yellow Warbler were seen.

Next they flew from Anchorage to Barrow where they saw Barrow's Yard Bird, the Snow Bunting. At Barrow, they went to the Top of the World Hotel and Pepe's Restaurant, where they had real Mexican Food in Alaska.

At Nome's Roadside, they saw Red Phalarope.

On the Barrow Gas Line Road, a Long-billed Dowitcher; Snowy Owl; King Eider; Long-tailed Duck and Steller's Eider showed up.

From Anchorage they drove to Denali and saw a Gray Jay along the way.

At Denali National Park, they bus you in. The group saw Grizzly Bear; Caribou; Doll's Sheep; a Moose with a Calf; and Willow Ptarmigan. Along the Denali Highway, Barrow's Goldeneye; Beaver; Bohemian Waxwing; and a nesting Cliff Swallow were seen. Tangle River Inn, Paxson, Alaska was a good place to stay. Next they went back to Anchorage (there were three hours of semi-darkness in Anchorage). From there, they went to the Matanuska Glacier. All in all, they had a wonderful trip and saw lots of birds and other wildlife. Skip took his photos with a Nikon D70 300mm zoom.

**Marie Asscherick/Ornithology Group Secretary**

**SET  
YOUR  
SITES  
FOR  
SOME  
SPECIAL  
SPRING  
VISITORS**



*Photo by Harlan Evans  
Ovenbird at High Island  
4/29/2012*

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