



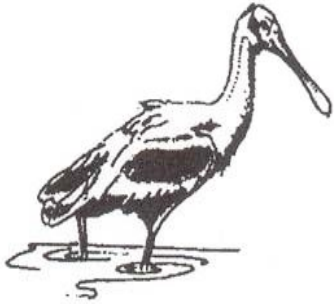
The Spoonbill

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

May 2013
Vol. 62 No. 5

May 6th Ornithology Group Monthly Meeting

Bayland Community Center
6400 Bissonnett, Houston



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

MAY EVENING PROGRAM - 7:30 P.M.

Dennis Shepler

Birding (by ear and eye) in Costa Rica

Dennis Shepler started birding in Charlotte, North Carolina in 1962, bringing him up to a grand total now of 51 years of birding. Moving from North Carolina he returned to his hometown, Houston, in 1963. He graduated from Westbury High School and then went on to study and obtain a degree in Wildlife Sciences in 1969, at Texas A&M University.

Dennis worked for three years with the A&M Wildlife Science Department's bird banding crew banding Wilson's Snipe for studies.

During his career he taught biology, environmental and marine sciences, in Texas and California. He also lived, worked, and birded in southeast Arizona, on a ranch outside of Tucson for a year.

Dennis has birded extensively in Costa Rica and lived there in 1996 and 2012. Since 2007 he has taken science equipment and computers to Costa Rica and donated them to schools. His month-long stays allowed him to surf and bird the Guanacaste region and bird other areas such as Rincon de la Vieja, Volcan Cacao, Santa Rosa National Park, Bijagua, Monteverde, Volcan Irazu, Cahuita, and the Osa Peninsula.

Dennis and his wife were married in Smith Oaks, High Island, in 1971. They have a daughter named Wren. Enjoying his retirement he and spends his time volunteering, painting birds, and of course, birding.

O.G.
- MAY YOU -
GO MIGRATION CRAZY

OUTDOOR NATURE CLUB
The Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary
MAY 19th Dally Days
highlight subject: Nature Photography

O.G. FIELD TRIP

5/20/2013

Sam Houston NF
(Breeding Warblers)

OG Field trip stills needs a volunteer
coordinator and details to be decided
PLEASE CONTACT ADAM WOOD



NATURE DISCOVER CENTER

Lunch with the Birds:

Our weekly bird walks for spring migration noon and runs through May 8th.

Spingtime Early Evening Birdwalks:

Our early evening birdwalks will be held on Tuesday evenings through May 7th
from 6 pm until about 7:15 pm.



**UTE MOUNTAIN / MESA VERDE
BIRDING FESTIVAL**

**MAY 8 - 12, 2013
CORTEZ, COLORADO**

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER: MARK OBMASCIK
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF
THE BIG YEAR**

**UTEMOUNTAINMESAVERDEBIRDINGFESTIVAL.COM
970-565-1151**

NEAR AND FAR FLUNG BIRDING EVENTS

International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) held annually in May

IMBD Information web - <http://birds.fws.gov/imbd> or <http://www.BirdDay.org>

Galveston Spring Bird Count: May 4

Come help us celebrate International Migratory Bird Day by participating in our Spring Bird Count. Galveston County includes some great birding: High Island, the Bolivar Peninsula, Galveston Island, Pelican Island, Texas City, and the mainland, as far north as the Harris County line and as far east and west as Chambers and Brazoria counties. Everyone is welcome! This is your opportunity to learn about a part of Galveston County you might not know already.

Teams are organized to cover different areas, and participants can bird for part of the day or for the entire 24-hour period. Beginning birdwatchers will be teamed up with more experienced birders, so don't be afraid to help due to lack of experience! If you are simply going to be birding in Galveston County on May 4 and don't want to be on a specific team, you can still participate by getting the forms and keeping records of your sightings. Contact **Norma Rubin**, by e-mail (preferred) or call 409-763-0667.

HOUSTON

AUDUBON HOSTING

MANY EXCITING

SPRING TIME EVENTS

May 23rd
Brazos Bend State Park
HAS Seniors Bus Trip

May 25th
HAS Field Trip TBA

June 3rd
High Island and Bolivar Birding
HAS Seniors Bus Trip

Houston Audubon May Membership Meeting

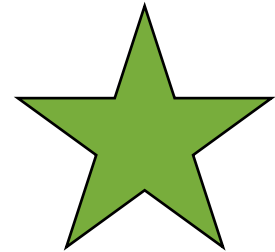
This event is free and open to the general public.

Reconnecting People with Nature Speaker: Gary Clark

Date: Thursday, May 9, 2013

Time: Social at 7:00 PM, Meeting at 7:30 PM

Place: United Way Center, 50 Waugh



Join naturalist Gary Clark for an inspirational program on the importance of connecting our fellow citizens to the vital connection they have with nature. Gary will use poetry and literature to show that the fate of nature is our fate.

Photo by Kathy Adams Clark

Gary is the weekly nature columnist for the Houston Chronicle and San Antonio Express News. He also publishes feature articles in state and national magazines and has written five books including Texas Wildlife Portfolio, Texas Gulf Coast Impressions, Backroads of the Texas Hill Country, Enjoying Big Bend National Park, and Portrait of Houston. Gary is also a contributing author in the book, Pride of Place: A Contemporary Anthology of Texas Nature Writing. He has won eight writing awards and is the recipient of the 2004 Excellence in Media Award and the 2010 Synergy Media Award for Environmental Reporting.

Gary has been active in the birding community for over 30 years. He founded the Piney Woods Wildlife Society in 1982 and founded the Texas Coast Rare Bird Alert in 1983. He served as President of the Houston Audubon Society from 1989 to 1991 and purchased the North American Rare Bird Alert for Houston Audubon in 1990. He was vice-president of the Board of Directors for the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory from 2001 to 2008. He currently sits on the Board of Advisors for the Houston Audubon Society and Gulf Coast Bird Observatory.

Gary is also Professor of Business and Developmental Studies at Lone Star College—North Harris. During his career at the college, Gary has served as Vice President of Instruction, Dean of Business, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Associate Dean of Natural Sciences, Professor of Marketing, Professor of Developmental Writing, Faculty Senate President, and he is a recipient of the Teacher Excellence Award.

The Houston Audubon Board Election will precede the program.

High Island Free Walks-

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

Continue to May 6, 2013: morning walk at Boy Scout Woods, midday shorebirding at various sites, and afternoon walks at Smith Oaks. Walks are held Thursday through Monday (no walks on Tuesday and Wednesday).

-Boy Scout Woods. Walks last roughly 2 hours, depending on conditions and sightings

-Shorebirds (meet at HAS Boy Scout Woods gate). The focus is not only the shorebirds covered in the ID workshops but also a range of coastal or freshwater birds (depending on sites visited). Walks last roughly 3 1/2 hours, depending on conditions and sightings.

-Smith Oaks (meet in Old Mexico Rd parking lot). Walks start with a search for warblers in the woods followed by a quick circuit of the Rookery. Walks last roughly 2 hours, depending on conditions and sightings.

High Island Bird Identification Workshops- Sign up on the H.A.S. website

The morning shorebird workshops are scheduled so that participants can go on the noon shorebird walk and use their new identification skills. The afternoon warbler workshops will end just in time for the 4 PM walk in Smith Oaks. All workshops cost \$10 per person and are held at Boy Scout Woods. You can sign up online up till noon of the Friday prior to the workshop or at High Island on the day of the workshop. There is seating for 20 participants at the workshops.

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

April 27 & April 28

10 AM - Noon *ID Workshop: Shorebirds of the UTC*

Noon *Field Trip: Shorebird Showdown*
Open to all. We'll meet at Boy Scout Woods and self-drive from there. The sites are flexible, depending on up-to-the-minute information.

2-4 PM *ID Workshop: Warblers of the UTC*

4 PM *Field Trip: Warbler Workout*
Open to all. We'll look at warblers at Smith Oaks, followed by a short tour of the Rookery.

Sign up on the H.A.S. web-site

HOUSTON

AUDUBON

MONTHLY

EVENTS

Monday 6TH
HOGG SANCTUARY BIRD SURVEY
MONTHLY EVENT
FIRST MONDAY 8:30 A.M.

CONTACT: AARON STOLEY

Monday 13TH

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

CONTACT: JIM WINN

Saturday 11TH

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

CONTACT: jason.bonilla@gmail.com

Saturday 11TH

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

CONTACTS: ANDREW HAMLETT

Thursday 16TH

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

CONTACT: STENNIE MEADOURS
AND DAVID HANSON

Saturday 18TH

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

CONTACTS: JOY HESTER / MARK MEYER



photo by Harlan Evans

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

Check out the Houston Audubon Website for details on May events and more

Bald Eagle Nest at Lake Houston

by Layton Guinn

My wife and I have been observing a Bald Eagle nest for several weeks. The nest is high in a dead pine tree near the San Jacinto River a little west of where the river flows into Lake Houston. We found out about the nest from some of my birding friends. As of mid-April we have been observing the nest for 11 weeks. Our observations were made on random days and at random times typically for about 30 minutes to an hour per observation.

We are observing from a spot that is about three or four hundred yards away from the nest. Our 8 power binoculars give us a good look without us disturbing the eagles. We could get closer as some people have done, but the nest is on private land, and we think that it's better for the eagles if we stay back.

The two young eaglets were already about four weeks old when we started our observations, February 3, 2013. They were already in full brown feathers when we first observed them. By this time they were about half the size of the adults.

During the first few weeks of our observations there was usually one or both parent birds close to the nest. As the young eagles got older and larger they were left alone at times.

After a few weeks the two eaglets were stretching their wings and occasionally flapping their wings as they moved about the nest. They seemed to like to get right out on the edge of the nest.

The large nest looked rather flat, but it must have had some depression in it because we would only see one young eagle for a while only to suddenly have the other one pop up.

During our observations on March 2 on a very windy day we watched as one of the young eagles was spreading its wings and riding in the wind about five feet above the nest for several seconds before it would drop back down to the nest. It was careful to keep the nest under it. The other young eagle was also actively spreading its wings, but it was not yet ready to lift off.

On March 7 we found both young eagles perched out on limbs that supported the nest. We watched as they worked their way back to the nest and kind of hopped and flapped their wings to get back onto the nest.

On March 10 we watched one of the young eagles take its first flight. It had been very active moving about on the nest and exercising its wings. Suddenly it took off and flew towards a dead pine tree that was about 75 feet away. It turned and made an attempt to land on a limb but missed and kept flying back towards the nest and made a landing in a live pine tree first missing the initial landing then dropping down through the branches to a lower limb where it sat for several minutes looking back at the nest. Then after about ten minutes it took off and flew back to the nest. The other young eagle hopped over immediately as if to congratulate the sibling and to ask all about what it is like to fly. Probably what it really was doing was checking to see if the sibling had brought some food.

Observations over the next couple of days sometimes found both young eagles on the nest and sometimes found only one young eagle on the nest. Then on March 14 we arrived and found no young eagles on the nest. We scanned the nearby trees and found one young eagle perched in a dead pine tree about 30 feet to the right of the nest tree. We think that we missed seeing this young eagle take its first flight by only a few minutes. There was someone walking around below the nest tree taking pictures, and we suspect that this encouraged the young eagle to take off and leave the nest. We could also see an adult eagle flying back and forth just beyond the tree line and down low as if keeping an eye on the young one. The young eagle remained perched for about ten minutes until the photographer started moving closer towards the tree where it was perched. Then the young eagle took off with powerful wing beats and flew off over the tree line towards the river. A few minutes later we saw the young eagle and an adult eagle flying around together out over the river just beyond the tree line. We only saw one adult and one young eagle during this observation.

At this point we wondered if the eagles would ever come back to the nest now that both young eagles had fledged. We continued to observe for several more weeks and found that both the young eagles and both of the adults

continued to come back to the nest tree especially late in the day. The eagles were continuing to use the nest as a feeding platform, and apparently they were using the nest and the nest tree as a place to roost.

We also noted throughout our observations that the eagle family seemed to take turns eating. We never saw any contentious behavior over food. We got our best observation of this on the afternoon of March 17th, a few days after both of the young eagles had fledged. We observed an adult eagle bring a fish in its claws to the nest. There was already one young eagle on the nest, and fairly soon the other adult arrived on the nest. We watched as two adult eagles and one young eagle took turns eating the fish. Perhaps they had already established a pecking order, but the feeding process was peaceful, and it looked like they were taking turns.

I'm writing this summary in mid-April during the 11th week of our observations. It has been a great experience to watch this family of Bald Eagles living so close to the metropolis of Houston. We have admired how well the parent birds have successfully raised their two eaglets. We plan to continue our observations of the nest as long as the eagles keep coming back to it.

Layton C. Guinn
April 12, 2013



*Photo by William Janz
A Wisconsin injured Eagle release*



Photos by Ben Hulsey of Hermann Park Eagles

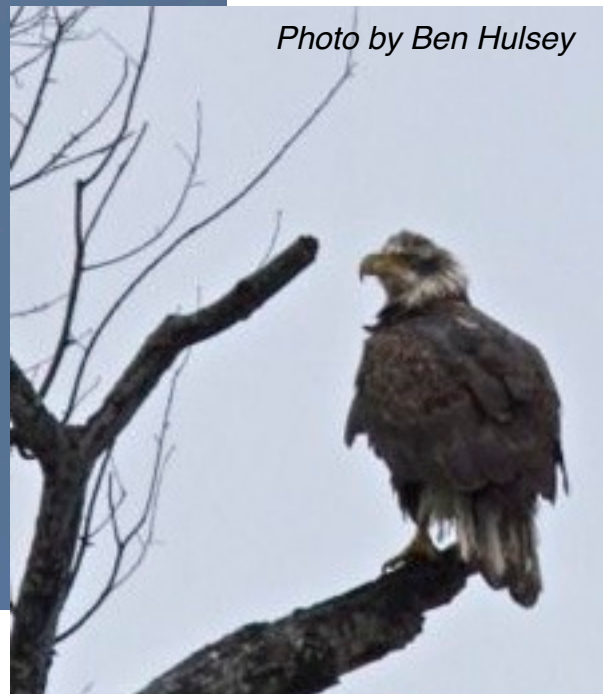


Photo by Ben Hulsey

A few good ways to spend your O.G.
summer break

Learn some Fun Facts

Share with a child
and inspire others to love wildlife and ecology

Travel and find
some new birding hot spots...

Support birding advocate groups like the HAS,
ABC, The Cornell lab of ornithology, etc.
they have great websites with
informative articles!

Spend some time considering the
need for O.G. members to
Volunteer and how you can help.

Great Horned Owl Fun Facts

BABY OWL'S RESCUE

by Jennifer Keats Curtis,

permitted excerpts

Illustrated by Laura Jacques

In January or February, the male and female will call to each other as part of their "dating" or courtship.

The female usually lays two or three white eggs at a time.

When born, the hatchlings are covered with a white down.

Both parents incubate the eggs for 26 to 35 days (about a month, give or take). They will guard the nest and will either kill or drive off any other animal that tries to get to it.

An owl pair will take over other birds' nests. They are not picky about where the nest is and will use a nest in trees, on the side of cliffs, or even on buildings.

Both parents continue to feed their young until the young leave the nest and fly off to find their own home. This happens the fall after they are born.

When they are about 6 or 7 weeks old, young start to walk around on branches near the nest. They are called branchers.

We think they can live to be about 12 or 13 years old in the wild. Their main predators are other Great Horned Owls.

When flying, their wingspan (measured from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other wing), can be approximately twice their size. Hold out your arms and have someone measure your "armspan." How does that compare to an owl's wingspan?

A few hours after eating, they throw up pellets of fur, feathers, bones, and other undigested parts of their meals. These pellets help us to understand what owls eat.

Great Horned Owls live in all kinds of habitats: backyards, deserts, forests, and even in the arctic.



photo by Allison Rhodes

They are birds of prey. Their food is alive when they catch it. They eat mice, squirrels, rabbits, skunks, crows, some fish, and even some domestic cats. They swallow small prey whole, but will tear larger animals apart using their talons and beaks.

They weigh between 3 and 4 lbs. (1.36-1.81kg).

The young owls can fly when they are about 9 or 10 weeks old and are then called fledglings.



HAVE A WONDERFUL SUMMER TIME O.G. BREAK - SEE YOU BACK IN AUGUST

Over the past two years I have enjoyed bringing events, articles, and photo's to The Spoonbill and the Ornithology Group members. The 2013 - 2014 O.G. season needs a volunteer to continue in this role. This job has been a wonderful learning experience and has brought me closer to many of the fine folks who receive the newsletter. It would be a shame if the wonderful traditions of the newsletter and the field trips become extinct because members are willing to participate but not willing to commit their time to make these happen. Vicki Sims

*We need O.G. members to Volunteer for the
Field Trip Coordinator and The Spoonbill
to help keep the club active 2013-2014*

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	marcydbrown@gmail.com
Vice-Chair:	Nina Rach	281-433-0651	NRach@autreVie.com
Vice-Chair Asst:	Stennie Meadors		stenmead@aol.com
Secretary:	Marie Asscherick	832-721-8140	birdswelove4ever@aol.com
Treasurer:	Harlan Evans	713-797-6468	harlanj42@sbcglobal.net
Clearing House:	David Sarkozi	713-412-4409	david@sarkozi.net
Library:	Debbie Valdez	832-794-3314	xxijumpstreet@sbcglobal.net
Membership:	Margret Simmons	713-776-2511	msimmons@compassnet.com
Membership CoChair:	JoAnn Raine	832-567-7310	rainejoann@gmail.com
Field Trips:	Adam Woods	713-515-1692	birdsondabrain@earthlink.net
The Spoonbill:	Vicki Sims	713-779-7609	oncspoon@gmail.com

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

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