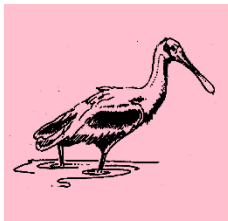


## Monthly Meeting March 2, 2015

**Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet St, Houston, TX**



6:30 pm [Learning Corner](#): Birding Magazines by Iris Poteet

7:00 pm [Ornithology Group](#) (OG) Business Meeting

7:30 pm [Program](#): Birding in Ecuador by Glenn Olsen

[Field Trip](#): ONC's Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary, Saturday, March 28, 8:30 am, led by Aaron Stoley

[Amarillo Birding | Williamson County OG Trip | Renew Membership](#)

## Birding Magazines

by Iris Poteet

Iris will show copies of a number of birding magazines and talk about the contents of the best of them.

## Birding in Ecuador

By Glenn Olsen

He has led several trips to this birdy South American country and his talk and photos should encourage you to explore outside the USA.

Glenn Olsen leads birding ventures in the Houston area. He conducts birding ID classes for Houston Audubon and leads van trips to Texas hot spots. Glenn is a master naturalist and his interests extend to insects and plants. Joann Raine went with Glenn to Amarillo, Texas in January; the winter birds of the western prairie did not disappoint. See Joann's article in this issue.

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## ONC's Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary, 8:30 am

Led by Aaron Stoley

Please contact Debbie Valdez if you are interested in sharing a ride so we can arrange to meet to carpool. We will meet Aaron Stoley at the gate at 8:30.

***Directions to the sanctuary (GPS at entrance gate: N 30° 32.141' W 95° 13.564')***

**Route 1 — US 59 via Cleveland**

Take US Highway 59 north to Cleveland; turn left on FM 2025; go five miles and turn left on FM 945. Go 11 miles to the entrance on your right.

## **Route 2 — I-45 via Willis**

Take I-45 north to Willis; turn right on FM 1097 to SH 150; go approx. 9 miles to FM 945 South; turn right. Go two miles to the entrance on your left.

## **Route3 — I-45 via New Waverly**

Take I-45 north to New Waverly; turn right on SH 150; go approx. 17 miles to FM 945 South; proceed as above.

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## **Amarillo Birding**

**By Joann Raine**

I knew it was going to be cold in the Panhandle of our fair state, but we hit the coldest week of their year so far. Jan 3-7 brought 4 inches of snow and wind chills of zero. That only resulted in delaying morning van starts till the sun was up. It was slippery, but we birded a lot from the van windows until some subjects decided to show themselves.



The reason to brave the western windy part of Texas in winter is to get binocular sightings of the birds that are only seen here in winter months. Hawks are the main search prospects. We found several Prairie Dog burrow colonies and waited for the Burrowing Owls and the Ferrugenous

Hawks to appear in symbiosis with the mammals. Flying and perched large hawks were an ID challenge. Many of the Red Tail Hawks are atypical of the eastern forms. There biggest challenge was to see the Prairie Falcon known to be in the Amarillo area. It was perched on a telephone pole along the snowy highway and we all studied the bird in a scope. In all we saw seven species of hawks and falcons.

The other birds of great interest are the wintering sparrows and longspurs. Horned Larks filled the stubble cornfields and rummaged along the highway roadsides. It was more interesting to search through their numbers and find the Lapland Longspurs. Wish we could have identified more longspurs, but the wind and cold made that unsuccessful.

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## **Williamson County OG Trip**

**By Stephan Lorenz (trip leader)**

**Saturday January 31, 2015**

By 11 am we were all happy, with most of the target birds in the bag we could pack up and spend the rest of the day lounging. Of course we did not, since we still had a few birds to chase, most notably a Striped Sparrow, a potential 1<sup>st</sup> for the ABA. But we had an excellent morning indeed. Leaving the Best Western in Taylor by 7 am, we stopped along CR360 to scan the fallow fields for longspurs and plovers of the mountain sort.

During our second stop along CR360 we had a flock of McCown's Longspurs and fortunately these bird-mice actually kept coming closer and closer instead of flying off to distant horizons in undulating flocks as they are wont to do. During the next thirty minutes we had scoped about two dozen and obtained some of the best views I have ever had of the species. Two males were almost in full breeding plumage. One longspur showed pronounced melanin reduction in the neck and nape, giving it a neat white collared appearance.



**McCown's Longspurs in flight Photo Stephan Lorenz**

While we were enjoying scope views of the longspurs and Horned Larks, Jean spotted a fast flying flock of white and brown birds. Everybody picked up the birds whirling above the dirt field, the unmistakable Mountain Plovers. The flock settled distantly, but in the scope we were



able to get great views of at least 20 Mountain Plovers. After the plovers took off, Al scoped a pale Merlin for all of us, a great bird which I nearly overlooked.

The morning could not get much better, but we received a call from the Burrowing Owl, and after some searching found the culvert where it roosts. Instead of moving further into the pipe our luck held again and the owl actually came out completely for awesome scope views, a much desired lifer for some of us.

We continued to Friendship Park and ate a field lunch, some of us in the car out of the blustery wind. We added a few water birds with the best of the bunch being Eared Grebes. After lunch we headed straight to CR428 where a Striped Sparrow had been making daily appearances for nearly three weeks. This potential first record for the ABA is a species endemic to Mexico where it occurs in pine forests and areas of bunch grass of the western highlands. Whether this bird is a natural vagrant has been questioned and it remains to be seen whether it will be accepted officially on the Texas State List.



**Burrowing Owl Photo Stephan Lorenz**

Our exceptional luck seemed to continue as the bird was apparently out by the road right when we arrived. We could not see it from our angle and a car driving by flushed it. Fortunately it did not take long before it re-appeared, conveniently perching high in a roadside shrub. During the next hour we had repeated views of this mega rarity, including prolonged observation in the scope. This was a distinct and beautiful species indeed. In between appearances of the special sparrow we were entertained by Harris's, White-crowned, Swamp, Song, Lincoln's sparrows, plus we spotted the Red-headed Woodpecker (locally rare) right before we left.



**Striped Sparrow photo by Michelle Rometry.**





**There is a Striped Sparrow out there potential 1<sup>st</sup> for the ABA Photo Stephan Lorenz**

We continued to agricultural fields to the west of Granger Lake. It started to rain by now and after checking the fields quickly, not seeing anything new except the throngs of meadowlarks, we decided to head back into town. Nobody had any complaints about getting an extra hour of rest before a surprisingly good dinner at Applebees. Everyone on the trip got at least one lifer during the first day and it was going to be difficult to top during the second day.

## **Sunday February 1, 2015**

We left the hotel by 7 am to check the fields one more time in hopes of finding other species of longspurs, but despite finding two flocks they remained distant. After packing up we headed to Berry Springs Park where we added lots of good woodland birds, including Golden-crowned Kinglet, Northern Flicker, a nest building pair of Red-shouldered Hawks, and more.

A quick visit to Booty's Road Park added some birds. While things were overall quiet, we did get onto a single Lesser Goldfinch. An attempt to visit the lake was thwarted, well, by the dam itself, but all of us putting one and one together, steep rocky slope plus western edge of its range, we decided to try for Rock Wren. Within minutes we had a bobbing Rock Wren right in front of us, another lifer for some of us and a perfect cap to the successful trip. We hope to see all of you soon.

Birding at its best, the OG Group at Murphy Park in Taylor Photo Stephan Lorenz



## Trip List:

1. Gadwall
2. American Wigeon
3. Mallard
4. Northern Shoveler
5. Northern Pintail
6. Green-winged Teal
7. Lesser Scaup
8. Pied-billed Grebe
9. Eared Grebe
10. Double-crested Cormorant
11. American White Pelican
12. Great Blue Heron
13. Great Egret
14. Black Vulture
15. Turkey Vulture
16. Northern Harrier

17. Cooper's Hawk
18. Bald Eagle
19. Red-shouldered Hawk
20. Red-tailed Hawk
21. American Coot
22. Killdeer
23. Mountain Plover
24. Greater Yellowlegs
25. Ring-billed Gull
26. Forster's Tern
27. Eurasian Collared-Dove
28. White-winged Dove
29. Mourning Dove
30. Burrowing Owl
31. Belted Kingfisher
32. Red-headed Woodpecker
33. Red-bellied Woodpecker
34. Ladder-backed Woodpecker
35. Downy Woodpecker
36. Northern Flicker
37. Crested Caracara
38. American Kestrel
39. Merlin
40. Eastern Phoebe
41. Loggerhead Shrike
42. Blue Jay
43. American Crow
44. Horned Lark
45. Carolina Chickadee
46. Black-crested Titmouse
47. Rock Wren
48. House Wren
49. Carolina Wren
50. Golden-crowned Kinglet
51. Ruby-crowned Kinglet
52. Eastern Bluebird
53. American Robin
54. Northern Mockingbird
55. European Starling
56. American Pipit
57. Cedar Waxwing
58. McCown's Longspur



59. Orange-crowned Warbler
60. Pine Warbler
61. Yellow-rumped Warbler
62. Striped Sparrow
63. Chipping Sparrow
64. Field Sparrow
65. Vesper Sparrow
66. Lark Sparrow
67. Savannah Sparrow
68. Song Sparrow
69. Lincoln's Sparrow
70. Swamp Sparrow
71. White-throated Sparrow
72. Harris's Sparrow
73. White-crowned Sparrow
74. Northern Cardinal
75. Red-winged Blackbird
76. Western Meadowlark
77. Eastern Meadowlark
78. Brewer's Blackbird
79. Common Grackle
80. Great-tailed Grackle
81. Brown-headed Cowbird
82. House Finch
83. Lesser Goldfinch
84. American Goldfinch
85. House Sparrow

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## **2015 Dues are Due!**

Don't forget to renew your ONC/OG dues if you haven't already done so. ONC/OG dues are paid yearly on a calendar basis beginning January 1st. Ornithology Group dues are used to pay honorariums and travel expenses for speakers at OG meetings, to make OG donations to other organizations, and for a few other OG expenses. Life Members of ONC still need to pay yearly OG dues. Pay by check at the next OG meeting or use the form below (it specifies the proper dues amounts) to submit updated information for the ONC database, and mail along with your check to the ONC post office box.

We need your dues to keep the Ornithology Group running!

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

Thank you for your renewal!

**TO START OR RENEW A MEMBERSHIP:**

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_

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

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

ONC Annual Dues: \$ 8.00 for individuals; \$ 15.00 for families

OG Annual Dues: \$ 12.00 for individuals; \$ 15.00 for families

***Total: \$ 20.00 for individuals; \$ 30.00 for families***

Additional contributions are welcome in any amount.

Send to:

Outdoor Nature Club

PO Box 1014

Bellaire, TX 77402

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Secretary | needed

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