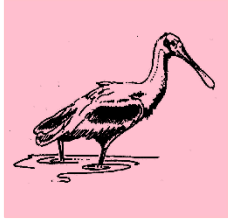


## Monthly Meeting May 4, 2015

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



6:30 pm [Learning Corner](#): Oven birds of Brazil by Stephan Lorenz

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

7:30 pm [Program](#): Birding the Amazon by Stephan Lorenz

[Field Trip](#): Anahuac and High Island, Saturday, May 9, led by Stephan Lorenz

[Splittable Bird Species | Golden-Wing Warblers Anticipate Storm](#)

## **Birding the Amazon: Among the Avian Riches of the Cristalino Jungle Lodge, Brazil**

**Stephan Lorenz**

The Amazon Basin extends over vast swaths of South America and can rightfully be called the cradle of biodiversity. There are more kinds of plants, insects, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals growing, crawling, slithering, hopping, and walking through these jungles than any rain forest in the world. Of course, bird diversity is also staggering. Within this vast basin several areas are especially rich in birdlife and the Cristalino Jungle Lodge in central Brazil sits squarely within one of these hyper-diversity hotspots. An incredible 586 species have been reported from the area and the majority of these species can be found in the primary rain forest of the Cristalino Private Reserve. The area is home to healthy populations of macaws, large raptors, including Harpy and Crested eagles, trumpeters, and a wide variety of antbirds, woodcreepers, and tanagers. Almost 100 species of flycatchers sally through the forest here. In addition, large mammals also thrive with several species of monkeys, tapir, and peccaries seen regularly, plus the chance encounter with a puma or jaguar. This will be a photographic journey through one of the best birding places in the world.

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## **Anahuac and High Island, Saturday, May 9**

**By Stephan Lorenz**

Plan on meeting the group at 8:00 am at the Anahuac Visitor Center (4318 FM 1985, Anahuac, TX 77514). We'll see what the marshes and rice fields have to offer before going on to High Island for more spring migrants.

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## **Splittable Bird Species**

**By JoAnn Raine**

Here are the top 10 (from most to least splittable according to David Sibley)

### **Willet – Eastern and Western**

These two populations have no contact on the breeding grounds, and are recognizable in all seasons by structure, plumage, and voice. I can't think of any reason to argue for maintaining these as a single species.

### **Whip-poor-will – Eastern and Mexican**

Two populations with entirely separate breeding ranges, very different songs, differences in DNA, and subtle differences in plumage. (Nathan Pieplow of Earbirding.com reports that the AOU has now voted to split Whip-poor-will, see his post [here](#).)

### **Winter Wren – Eastern and Western**

Two populations differ consistently in songs, calls, and DNA, with subtle differences in plumage. This proposal has [already passed](#) an early round of voting in the checklist committee and may be official in their 2010 supplement to be published this summer. A thorough review of differences in songs and calls by Nathan Pieplow is [here](#).

### **Xantus's Murrelet – Northern (scrippsi) and Southern (hypoleucus)**

Two populations with little or no breeding range overlap, no evidence of hybridization and consistent differences in plumage and voice. The status quo would seem to be the only thing in favor of keeping these as a single species.

### **Yellow-rumped Warbler – Myrtle (Eastern) and Audubon's (Western)**

Two populations differ consistently in plumage and calls, slightly in song. These were lumped as a single species in the 1970s, but further research and a shift in philosophy now points to full species status. They certainly seem at least as distinct as Baltimore and Bullock's Orioles.

### **White-breasted Nuthatch – Eastern, Interior West, and Pacific**

A three-way split of this species would be based on obvious differences in calls, and subtle but consistent differences in plumage and bill size, as well as DNA. A thorough review of the issues by Nathan Pieplow is [here](#).

### **Marsh Wren – Eastern and Western**

Two populations differ consistently in song, subtly in calls and plumage. These are not quite as clear-cut as the Winter Wrens, but I predict that further research will support species status.

## **Fox Sparrow – Sooty, Thick-billed, Slate-colored, and Red**

The Fox Sparrows have been on everyone's list of potential splits for a long time, with differences in plumage, calls, songs, and DNA. Among the reasons for inaction are lots of apparent intergrades where these populations meet, and the sheer complexity of the group. The distribution of the four groups of Fox Sparrows are similar to the sapsuckers (Yellow-bellied, Red-naped, and two forms of Red-breasted) or solitary vireos (Blue-headed, Plumbeous, and Cassin's) but the sparrows seem more distinctive and more deserving of species status.

## **Spruce Grouse – Taiga and Franklin's**

Two populations differ significantly in plumage and display. There are reports of intergradation where their ranges meet in western Canada, but following the recent split of Blue Grouse into Dusky and Sooty these two deserve a closer look.

## **Western Scrub-Jay – Coastal and Interior (Woodhouse's)**

Two populations differentiated by plumage and voice. Biogeographically these two resemble the Oak and Juniper Titmouse split of a few years ago. A proposal to split Western Scrub-Jay recently failed an early vote in the checklist committee for want of more research in the contact zone.

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## **Golden-Winged Warblers Abandon Breeding Grounds Anticipating Severe Storm**

**By JoAnn Raine**

Birds' abilities to sense approaching storms and imminent earthquakes are not understood well, but it's clear they're better than our own. Now, thanks to researchers led by Henry Streby of the University of California Berkeley, we know that songbirds, too, are acutely aware of coming bad weather.

In 2013, he and his team equipped 20 male Golden-winged Warblers that nest in eastern Tennessee with miniature light-level geolocators. He later recovered backpacks from five birds.

Each spent the winter in Colombia and arrived on breeding territories between April 13 and April 27, 2014, just as a powerful weather system started to move east through the central and southern United States. The storm would spawn 84 tornadoes and kill 35 people, but the warblers eluded it.

One to two days before it hit, each bird abandoned its territory and flew south to the Gulf Coast, over 400 miles away. The warblers returned May 1-2, after the storm had passed, and promptly resumed defending territories. Most likely, Streby suggests, the birds were tipped off by ultra-low-frequency sound waves produced by the advancing storm.

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