

Monthly Meeting August 3, 2015

Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet St, Houston, TX



6:30 pm [Learning Corner](#): No topic scheduled; come early to visit

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

7:30 pm [Program](#): Advancing Ornithology through Technology

[Field Trip](#): Purple Martin Roost and Chimney Swift Descent, August 12, led by Pam Smolen

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Advancing Ornithology Through Technology

By Fred Collins

From digital acoustics recordings to geolocating to genetics, and more, ornithology has benefited from rapidly advancing and increasingly available technologies. We will use some recent findings to show how these technologies have allowed ornithologists to refute long-held assumptions, confirm suspicions, and solve mysteries about the lives birds.

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Purple Martin Roost and Chimney Swift Descent

August 12, 7:15 PM for the Martin roost; About 8 PM for Chimney Swift descent

Led by Pam Smolen

Gather at the pond on Fountains Lake Drive behind the Fountains Shopping Center at 7:15 PM to observe this prime local Purple Martin mass roost. Then the group will go to Lakeview Elementary School at Wood Street and Lakeview Drive to watch a huge flock of Chimney Swifts descend down a tall chimney.

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OG Field Trip Report: Anahuac NWR and High Island, May 9

Stephan Lorenz

About 16 intrepid birders set forth during the Houston Ornithological Group Trip to Anahuac NWR and High Island to scour the coast for late migrants. It was a fantastic day, mostly overcast with moderate temperatures. Although the south winds and lack of rain didn't result in large numbers of migrants we were still able to pull out a few warblers and the shorebirds were fantastic.

The day started at the humane hour of 8 am and we immediately spotted a locally uncommon Bronzed Cowbird among the more common blackbirds. A drive around Shoveler Pond produced multiple Purple Gallinules and the first concentrations of shorebirds of the day, which included many White-rumped and Stilt sandpipers. Marsh Wrens sang nonstop from the reeds and Orchard Orioles flitted across the road. A few, late Savannah Sparrows remained. Both whistling ducks were present in large numbers. A pair of Northern Bobwhites flushed by the entrance road.

After Anahuac NWR we backtracked along FM 1985 towards Fairview Rd. following a tip from some other birders. In the flooded rice fields here a flock of more than 50 Hudsonian Godwits was close to the road and we were able to scope both males and females. A Peregrine Falcon rocketed through, unsuccessfully chasing a Black-necked Stilt, flushing the shorebird flock, which wheeled around right in front of us. We could study the striking pattern of Hudsonian Godwits in flight.

We searched along Pear Orchard Road for more flooded fields, but found everything dry. It was time to head to High Island and we arrived at Boy Scout Woods just in time for lunch. The absence of other cars and visitors was exactly in line with our predictions, but we decided to have a lunch stop anyway. Surprisingly as soon as we arrived at the bleachers I spotted a bathing Ovenbird, at least one warbler. As we relaxed, fortunately there were also no mosquitos, a Northern Waterthrush made an appearance.

Some in the group spotted a Black-and-white Warbler and we added a single Swainson's Thrush. We moved on to Smith Oaks, which was also quiet, but we did manage to find a few small flocks of migrants. Eastern Wood Pewees were common and two trees held multiple Yellow-billed Cuckoos and Red-eyed Vireos. Here and there we did find warblers and added Magnolia Warbler and American Redstart. Other migrants were scarce and we barely turned up a Gray Catbird, but Bay-breasted and Blackburnian warblers added some color. The drips were relatively quiet, except for a single Great-crested Flycatcher.

We couldn't bypass the rookery and stopped to enjoy the nestling Roseate Spoonbills. Of course herons, egrets, and cormorants were busy coming and going. The ponds by the beach were packed with gulls, shorebirds, and terns and we added Royal, Caspian, Common, Sandwhich, Black, and Least terns all in one scope view. Many of the same shorebirds were present in great numbers and our only Reddish Egret of the day fed in the marsh. A Crested Caracara flew over and added to our raptor list. Retracing our route after the trip ended officially we got great views Dickcissels on territory. A fantastic day with a great group and I hope to see you on future trips.



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Program Minutes

The OG monthly meeting was held on Monday, May 4 at 6:30. Stephan Lorenz presented both the Learning Corner and the Program, both of which were well received. There was also a business meeting.

The Learning Corner was about Oven birds. We learned that the only “ovenbird” in the USA is actually a warbler and not a member of the Furnariidae family, more popularly known as ovenbirds. There are, at present, 312 species which range from southern Mexico to the southern tip of South America. They encompass many different names from Miners to Leaf Tossers to Wood Creepers to Honeros – which actually build nests which look like round brick ovens.

The main Program, which was described in the April Spoonbill, was about the Cristalino Jungle Lodge in Brazil, where Stephan guides during the summer. His great photos gave an overview of the Lodge and some of the 586 species which have been seen there. I suspect the temptation to go there has seeded itself in the mind of more than one audience member.

The next Ornithology Group meeting will be held on Monday August 3rd.

Meeting Minutes

Chair Nina Rach presented the new slate of officers who took their positions on May 4 and thanked those who had served previously.

OFFICERS

Chair: Nina Rach

Vice Chair (Programs): JoAnn Rain

Secretary: Jean Greenhalgh

Treasurer: Harlan Evans

Membership: Margaret Simmons
Field Trip Coordinator: Jean Booth
Spoonbill Editor: Larry Dybala
Librarian: Pam Smolen

Outdoor Nature Club Board Meeting

Marcy Brown, Past President and OG representative, gave a report on the February 19th ONC Board Meeting.

Topics discussed at that meeting included reinstating regular ONC meetings; the upcoming election of new officers; creation of a new website which would include areas for each sub-division; creating a management plan for the Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary.

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About the Ornithology Group

Chair (Interim): Nina Rach | 281-433-0651 | NRach@autrevie.com

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

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