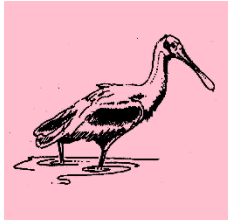


Monthly Meeting September 12, 2016

Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet St, Houston, TX



6:30 pm Learning Corner: Conversation about Crows, Magpies and Ravens by JoAnn Raine

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

7:30 pm [Program](#): Birding in Spain by Mark Kulstad

[Field Trip](#): Texas City Dike led by Allan Hardee (Marathon Ponds)

[A Birders Trip to Maine](#) | [Jaeger at West Beach, Galveston](#)
[Birding Trip to Costa Rica](#) | [Minutes of August 1 Meeting](#)

Birding in Spain

by Mark Kulstad

Mark is formerly a long-time professor at Rice University, teaching and researching in the history of philosophy. Currently he is the Academic Director of Rice University's Master of Liberal Studies Program, for college graduates of all ages, including some in their 80s. In birding, he has recently really emphasized Harris County birds, becoming (modestly) one of the top eBirders here, under the birding handle, Mark Westelev.

Mark has been a member of the OG on and off since 1975, when he first came to Houston. He remembers birding with Noel Pettingell, Ted Eubanks, Bob Behrstock, David and Jan Dauphin, Wesley and Glenn Cureton. They all made possible a move up from the novice birder category.

Spain has over 500 bird species (eBird), with a total area much less than that of Texas. Several of the species are spectacular, such as Spanish/Imperial Eagles and Greater Flamingo, and many others are impressive specialties difficult or impossible to get in standard European travel destinations.

This presentation for the Ornithology Group will focus on Extremadura and neighboring areas of western and southern Spain, long favored by birders visiting the Iberian Peninsula. I have made four trips to Spain, including one to Tenerife in the Canary Islands (practically Africa birding). The years were 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2013, so all in the last decade.

Spain has over 500 bird species (eBird), with a total area much less than that of Texas. Several of the species are spectacular, such as Spanish/Imperial Eagles and Greater Flamingo, and many others are impressive specialties difficult or impossible to get in standard European travel destinations. Taken as a total, Spain reflects the best of the African migration into Europe for the summer months. In Spain I have done some birding on my own, some with just a guide and me,

and some with a guide and a small group.

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Field Trip:

Sunday, September 18

Texas City Dike and Marathon Land Farm and Ponds in Texas City.

Meet at 7:30 at the pavilion next to the entrance of the dike. We will meet there and carpool to the Marathon ponds and meet up with Allan Hardee, the Security Supervisor of Marathon Galveston Bay Refinery, who will guide us to the ponds. There is a limit so you will need to sign up with Jean Booth by emailing her at ljeanbooth@aol.com.

If you prefer to just bird the dike you can meet up with us at the dike at 10 am. But still sign up by emailing Jean Booth and indicating that you will only bird the dike. Bring your walkie-talkies, bug spray, sunscreen, and snacks and lunch.

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A Birder's Trip to Maine

By Jennifer Backo

On May 21st 2016, I headed to Maine to join Field Guides Birding Tours for nine days of intensive birding around the state. I joined seven other birders and our guide, Eric Hynes, in Portland that day and we immediately took off for our first trip for coastal targets such as Common Eider. Then, on we went to find and hear American Woodcock doing its winnowing display at Spurwink Marsh.

The next day, we birded around Portland at Scarborough Marsh where we found sparrows, and lots of plovers, sandpipers and gulls. In the morning, our alarms went off before dawn so that we could be at Kennebunk Plains to see the sun rise. We also found many great birds that call this former blueberry barren of thousands of acres their home; including Eastern Whip-poor-Will, Upland Sandpipers, and Grasshopper Sparrows. Later, we headed for Bar Harbor to explore Mount Desert Island and take a pelagic trip to Petit Manon Island. The pelagic was the highlight of the whole trip for me and I saw all the birds on my bucket list for Maine: Atlantic Puffin, Black Guillemot, Razorbill and Gannet. Later in the day, we went on a hike up a hill behind the high school to see nesting Goshawks. Although we didn't approach closely, they saw us coming and flew at us screaming while we beat a hasty retreat.

After the Bar Harbor area, we headed for the mountains of Maine and New Hampshire. Our group got close looks at many breeding birds as we stopped at lakes, bogs, and mountain tops along the way. Eric was very good at hearing a bird and then picking it up with his scope so we all got good looks. In fact, we all saw twenty four species of warbler in his scope. In New Hampshire we had a private guide to take us up Mount Washington at dusk to find Bicknell's Thrush. While we watched them flitting in front of us, I can't say that we got good looks as it was getting dark, but we did hear their song twice which helped to differentiate the Bicknell's from the Swainson's in the dusk. In recent years Swainson's Thrush has moved further up the mountain. This, we think, is a response to global warming. While on the top of Mount Washington, we were fortunate to have a Spruce Grouse come out to the road and continue feeding just a few feet from our group.



On this trip, I saw many northern species of bird that are not normally found in Texas such as Gray Jay, Roseate Tern and Boreal Chickadee. Maine turned out to be a great place to see breeding warblers as the leaves are not all out on the trees in May, so it is easier to see the birds. I saw twenty four warbler species. We also saw many mammals including twelve moose.

I really enjoyed my trip with Field Guides. Eric was a wonderful guide who made me vow to learn more bird calls and listen more intently. The trip was very well organized with no glitches. The only thing negative I could say is that I never got enough sleep. We were always going

somewhere by dawn. But I think that is what comes with being a birder.

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Jaeger at West Beach, Galveston

By Teresa Connell and Connie Clark

I heard at the OG meeting of the continued presence of the Pomarine Jaeger at West Beach Galveston. On Tuesday, August 2, my friend and birder Connie Clark and I set out to see that lifer bird. We arrived at 11 am, paid the \$10 parking fee, and followed the directions we got from Barbara Herne and others.

Excited, we noticed a perched common nighthawk on a beach post. A woman walking towards us with a very large camera shared that our bird was in the pond, alone, near the jetty. Not much more than 100 yards from the parking lot, we struck gold! Looking right above our head, we watched a soaring Magnificent Frigatebird. The large visiting jaeger was standing at the edge of a beach pond giving us an excellent binocular views.

As I took photos, I noticed fresh, fluffy feathers around its neck, yet there was no evidence of the diagnostic center tail feathers on this very large, overall gray bird. The neck was white with distinctive black cap. Having abundant food present at that site, it does not have to hunt. We identified black terns, ruddy turnstone, least sandpipers, snowy plovers, and, of course, laughing gills in abundance. This respite may be all this bird needs to recover. It must have been a battering experience that grounded the seabird on this Galveston shore.



Concerned for a problem with its health, I scrutinized photos and remarks before and after our view. Mark Scheuerman posted that its bill looked healthy. Joseph Kennedy has posted photos on August 4 stating, "I did get a good look at the jaeger and while molting, it has already grown a couple of new primaries and other feathers." Maybe it will fly again. It's hard for nature lovers to watch visiting birds die on the beach. We were delighted with our good view and headed back to Houston, mission accomplished.

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Birding Trip to Costa Rica (July 2016)

by JoAnn Raine

Glenn Olsen led seven of us birding in the nicest country in Central America. I would always advise families to visit Costa Rica, as it is welcoming and safe for car travel. Not to mention that the water and food are palatable. Our Southwest flight ran into the national "outage" on the departure day. But the travel Gods were with us as the plane was at the gate and only delayed. Could have disrupted the whole plan. Remember your trip insurance.

Chris was such a good guide and full of info about the towns and trails. We stayed at two lodges, minimizing the driving. Can't pick a favorite, as both were special with lovely Lodge grounds. First half of the trip was located at Rancho Naturalista. This location is at about 2,500 feet and considered Central Valley. We toured in my favorite vehicle, the comfortable small bus. Rancho is one of the best known lodges and advertised also in Europe. The upstairs porch has hummingbird feeders. Coffee on the porch and 10 varieties of hummer 6 feet away.

Midweek we drove higher and encountered mountain species. A central spine of volcanic mountains divides East and West. Driving over the top of the 11,000-foot pass offers a stop at the radio towers for the rare birds in that environment. Descending the mountain to the west, we found great highway restaurants with feeders and their flowering attractions. July finds the Central Americas green with rain and full of blooming plants. The final accommodation was Suria Lodge on the side of the Savagre Valley at 7,500 feet. The lodge is a joy and full of places to watch birds.



We saw most of the spectacular birds and enjoyed feeding flocks of warblers and flycatchers. The roadside encounter with the Resplendent Quetzal is not to be missed. Toucans, tanagers and waders round out the days. OG is planning several programs with Costa Rica in mind. Pictures can be seen on JoAnn Raine Facebook, Costa Rica July 2016.

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Minutes of August 1 Meeting

By Jean Greenhalgh

The first OG monthly meeting of the 2016 - 2017 season was held on Monday, August 1 at 6:30 and 24 people attended.

Instead of our regular Learning Corner, attendees described some of their birding experiences over the last few months. A trip to Alaska yielded some good sightings including Snowy Owls, Arctic Warbler, and all four Eiders. The Davis Mountains in West Texas was another good destination with Phainopepla, Blue and Black-headed Grosbeaks, and Rufous Crowned sparrows. Locally Marie talked about the maternal bat colony under the Waugh Bridge attracting Red-Tailed and Swainson's Hawks and Peregrine Falcons. They are waiting most evenings for the bat exodus. The spectacle is best approached from the south side, parking along on Allen Parkway.

Jean Greenhalgh had been in Oregon for the summer and described some of the habitats and birds that could be seen. Ebird lists 524 species ever seen in Oregon, the fifth most in the USA after Texas, California, Arizona, and New Mexico. The coast has some great birds including Tufted Puffin, Black Oystercatcher, Black Turnstone, and Surfbird, though some are winter only birds. Of particular interest were the 12 breeding woodpecker species which call Oregon home. The Woodpecker festival held at Sisters, OR in June was mentioned. This was founded some years ago by East Cascades Audubon and Steve Shunk, the author of the new Peterson Woodpecker book, though he is no longer involved

JoAnn Raine asked attendees to check that OG has our correct current email address. She also encouraged us to go the OG website and Facebook page for current information and great photos.

The OG Field Trips. Jean Booth handed out a tentative list of Field Trips for the next 9 months and this, plus other trip suggestions, was discussed. The next trip is on September 18 to Texas City Dike/Marathon Land farms to be led by Allan Hardee. Jean B. will email final details.

October 8 is a tentative date for Brazos Bend. November 19 is possible for Matagorda Hot Spots and STP, led by Bob Friedrichs. December is CBCs. January 28 Ron Weeks will lead Freeport/Lake Jackson. February is to be confirmed and March 5 will be Galveston led by Alice Anne O'Donell

Additionally OG will be continuing quarterly bird surveys for Long Acres Ranch in Richmond. Due to flooding and the summer heat, the next dates have yet to be decided.

Jean Booth emails details of field trips to all members. If you are not receiving emails, please let Jean know at ljeanbooth@aol.com

In addition there are a couple of upcoming classes in which members may be interested.

Pearland Parks and Recreation are holding birding classes.

Nina Rach was our speaker telling us about Bird A Day birding.

This is a worldwide challenge to see a different bird every day for one year. The website birdaday.net is the home for this challenge. With over 10,000 bird species worldwide, 650 in Texas and over 400 in the seven local counties, it doesn't sound difficult. But only four Texas birders have done this – Sue Heath, Tad Finnell, Susan Foster, and Nina Rach, who is the only one to have done it twice in 2012 and 2015. Although many hundreds worldwide start on January 1 each year, fewer than 100 complete the task.

Nina found three things to be true: You will chase local rarities and vagrants; you will have a nemesis bird; after you get that bird it will be replaced by another in a rotating cast of nemeses.

Planning is the key to achieving the goal and she found the TOS Handbook of Texas Birds and eBird invaluable. As a general principle starting the year with the more seasonal and unusual birds is best, leaving the common, local birds for much later in the year.

Seasonal goals

Winter – Get winter residents and birds leaving. Spring – Migrating birds. Summer – little new in Texas so traveling is useful. Fall - Migrants

Texas group birding opportunities

Christmas Bird Counts in both January for rarities and December for missing local birds. OG trips, TOS meetings and trips, Texas Pelagic trips, out of state birding.

How Nina did it month by month

(All this was additional to local birding)

January – California Dana Point pelagic. (FYI this occurs four times a year organized by Sea and Sage Audubon.)

February – TX Sparrowfest. Locally Baytown and Sheldon Lake

March – Arizona – Phoenix Desert Botanic Garden; central CA

April – Migration , Featherfest, King Ranch, High Island. Used warblers and vireos in the Fall rather than Spring.

May - Cornell Global Big Day.

June - Mo Ranch, Kerr County TX, Kenney Wildlife Management Area

July - Go north - Hays County, San Marcos university Fish Camp; North East – Rhode Island at 1212 square miles is smaller than Harris County but has 400 miles of coastline.

August - CA and OK

September - Michigan

October - Brownsville's Oliviera Park for parrots.

November – Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival; Powderhorn Ranch Calhoun county.

December – Local birding and TX CBCs.

Concluding, Nina says it's fun to do and having a target is good as you have to get out and bird every day. You find local parks and birding areas you never knew existed.

The next Ornithology Group meeting will be held on Monday September 12th when Mark Kulstad will give an Introduction to European Birds, especially in Southern Spain.

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