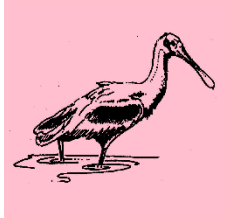


Monthly Meeting February 6, 2017

Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet St, Houston, TX



6:30 pm Learning Corner: Birds and Mammals of Galapagos Islands by Linda Sternbach

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

7:30 pm [Program](#): A Taste of Columbia Birding by Mike Austin

Field Trips: Katy Prairie in the Winter by Bob Honig, January 28, 6:30 pm; Corpus Christi Weekender by Mike Austin, February 10-12 Weekender.

Cold Birders and Hot Birds: Field Trip Report to Brazoria County Minutes of January 9, 2017 Meeting

2017 Dues are Due: <http://ornithologygroup.org/Dues>

A Taste of Columbia Birding by Mike Austin

by Mike Austin

Mike Austin will be our speaker at the Feb 6 OG meeting. He has recently led two field trips for us. He has visited Columbia and will speak about the spectacular scenery and avian life to be enjoyed.

He grew up in southwestern Ontario, Canada where, since retiring two years ago, he lives in the summer. He has been birding for sixty years and has lived on the Upper Texas Coast since 1978.

Mike is an avid lister with almost 850 North American birds and 587 Texas state birds. He has now visited 24 countries and has a world list over 4100.

Mike is also a very active eBirder and CBC participant and compiler. He has lectured and led field trips for many local and national groups and festivals. He previously ran the North American Rare Bird Alert for the Houston Audubon Society for 14 years.

He is very interested in bird vocalizations and, since retiring, have become a very avid nature photographer.

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Field Trips:

Katy Prairie Sunset in Winter

Saturday, January 28, 2:30 to 6:30 PM

Destination: Katy Prairie – we plan to focus on Katy Prairie Conservancy (KPC) properties to which the public does not have frequent access.

Guide: Bob Honig, KPC Board of Directors Member 1992-2016, moving to Advisory Boards in 2017, and OG member, has spent countless hours observing birds and other wildlife on the Katy Prairie (Bob lives within sight of the KPC Field Office).

Reservations: Space is limited to 20 participants, so we need you to sign up in advance to confirm a space on this great field trip. Just send me an email to register for this trip. We will have a wait list if over 20 of you sign up.

Special Instructions:

Once you sign up I will email you the *KPC release of liability* form that you will need to sign to authorize you to the KPC property property. Please bring your signed form with you. You can also print a copy off the website.

Bring a flashlight for the very end of the trip in case it's starting to get dark (it will be dark just after 6:30 PM).

Wear footwear that you don't mind getting a bit wet – it's still may be very wet in places.

Don't forget water, a hat, sunscreen, and insect repellent. (Though we don't expect insects to be an issue.

Regardless of the weather, please wear long pants and closed-toe shoes. Long sleeves will protect you from the sun and bugs.

Bring food if you want to eat your dinner as we watch the sunset (or at any other time during the field trip; you are welcome to bring a folding chair to sit in as we leisurely watch the sunset.) And of course bring your binoculars, scope, and camera.

Description: We'll explore grasslands, wetlands, and tree lines – on properties owned by the Katy Prairie Conservancy, which has helped protect approximately 20,000 acres in west Harris County and east Waller County. We hope to see a variety of wintering birds such as sparrows, hawks, and waterfowl. At sunset we plan to situate ourselves where we can observe the evening flight of maybe Sandhill Cranes or Long-billed Curlews, maybe wading birds and waterfowl, plus maybe a Short-eared Owl or two, we'll go where we think the action will be. Check out the Katy Prairie bird checklist.

Directions: Meet at KPC's Field Office on the Indiangrass Preserve in Waller County at 2:30 PM. From Houston go west on Interstate 10 – Take Exit 737 Pederson Rd. and turn right (north). Go north on Pederson Rd. about 1/2 mile until it tees into US 90 (note: no sign for US 90 here). Turn left (west) on US 90 and go about 1/2 mile to the first right (turn north) which is FM 2855. Go 6 miles north on FM 2855 to the intersection with FM 529. Continue straight across FM 529 – you are now on Morrison Rd. After 1 mile, Morrison makes a sharp left turn to the west – continue on Morrison 1 more mile to Pattison Rd. Turn right (north) onto Pattison Rd and go 3 miles to where Pattison tees into Hebert Rd. Turn left (west) on Hebert Rd.; go 1 mile to the KPC Field Office sign on the left – 31950 Hebert Rd. Turn left (south) through the entrance gate and go about 400 yards to the office. Map and More Directions on the KPC website.

Note: Should you wish to head out to the prairie a bit early, we suggest KPC's Matt Cook Memorial Viewing Platform at Warren Lake and/or Harris County Precinct 3's Paul Rushing Park.

If severe weather is predicted, check for an email from me for any last minute changes or cancellation of the field trip.

Send email to Ljeanbooth@aol.com to sign up for this field trip.

WEEKENDER - February 10, Friday at Noon through Sunday February 12 midday. Choke Canyon, Lake Corpus, and Corpus Christi by guided by Mike Austin

- Friday, Choke Canyon,
- Saturday, Lake Corpus Christi and Hazel Bazemore Park
- Sunday, Cayo del Oso, John F Kennedy Causeway..
- Registration Fee is \$50 per person, and dues paid for 2017.
- Once you sign up, we will send hotel information and more details.
- **Field trip is limited to 10 OG Members.**

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Cold Birders and Hot Birds: Houston Ornithology Group Field Trip to Brazoria County, January 7, 2017

By Ron Weeks

OG members met in Freeport for our January Field trip to Brazoria County guided by Ron Weeks. All had a great time, and here is the report Ron provided to us.



Had the privilege of showing hearty birders Nina Rach, Jean Booth, Sandy Parker, Barbara Stern, Mary Mack, John and Cindy Bartos, Jim Winn, Karen Terrell, Bill Wright and Marie Asscherick the winter hot spots in Brazoria County today. We started at San Bernard NWR with my car thermometer showing 24 degrees (wind chill of just 12) and large parts of the shallow marshes frozen over. But the birding was good. For example, we started at the Bobcat Woods and had Golden-crowned Kinglet, Black-and-white Warbler, Vermilion Flycatcher, Couch's Kingbird, and Ash-throated Flycatcher all while standing in the parking lot! As we moved to Wolfweed Reservoir we had killer views of a Palm Warbler. On the reservoir itself we had two Bald Eagles and a good mix of ducks including two Fulvous Whistling-Ducks. Rail Pond Road had a nice adult White-tailed Hawk, some close geese (including Ross's) and cranes and a Green Heron.

After a gourmet lunch and a deluxe bathroom stop at Bucee's, we headed to Quintana. There we had a late Common Tern fly by us on the jetty and land on the beach. As we watched it through the scopes, a Peregrine zoomed in and emptied the beach of birds. We finished at Brazoria NWR with the expected Lesser Black-backed Gulls and a pair of White-tailed Kites back

dropped by a huge storm cloud of smoke from a nearby prescribed burn. The smoke accented by the setting sun made for a spectacular finish to a very brisk day. We barely entered any woods due to the biting temperatures but still ended up with 109 species for the day by my count.

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Minutes of January 9, 2017 Meeting

By Jean Greenhalgh

The first OG meeting of the year was held on January 9, 2016 at the Tracy Gee community Center, 3599 Westcenter Drive, Houston. 26 people attended.

Meetings for the current year will be held at the usual venue, Bayland Park Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet Street, Houston, on the first Monday of the month at 6:30 pm. Except May's meeting will be held on the second Monday, 8th May.

The February 6 meeting will have Mike Austin speaking on Colombia Birding and the March 6 meeting will have Stephen Gast speaking about Birding in Cuba.

Membership fees of \$20 for 2017 are due now.

Nina Rach, OG President, arranged a raffle for us. Everyone received one entry for each Christmas Bird Count in which they participated. There were numerous prizes and many of us went home with one.

Rusti Stover presented the Learning Center on Rock Doves and their colorful variations.

Rock doves, *Columba livia*, now known as Rock Pigeons, are feral in America. There are still wild Rock Pigeons in Europe. There is evidence Neolithic man kept them in caves 10,000 years ago making them the first domesticated bird. There are also records of them being kept 5,000 years ago in both Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. They were brought to America in the early 1600s, possibly as a food source.

They live 15 years in captivity but feral pigeons live only 3 – 4 years. There are an estimated 400 million worldwide and are everywhere except the Antarctic, high Arctic and the Sahara Desert. Pairs form a life bond and females can breed at 7 months. Their nests of sticks or grass are built on any equivalent of the rocky ledges used by wild pigeons. They can have up to 5 – 6 broods a year with 1 -3 eggs per clutch.

There are seven recognized colorations, with some pigeons having a mixture of these basic colors. There are Blue bar, the most common, mostly shades of grey; Red bar; Checker, on wings; Red; Spread, very dark; white; and pied. Rusti showed us some lovely photos of the various colors present in Houston Rock Pigeon flocks.

The evening's program was presented by Kendra Kocab, a Naturalist at Kleb Woods, on How Fast Do Baby Birds Grow.

Kendra went through the stages of bird reproduction for most birds – eggs; clutch size; incubation; hatching; development and maturity.

For each stage Kendra showed many pictures to illustrate the range of possibilities.

- Egg sizes range from tiny, hummingbirds, to very large, ostriches. They are different shapes, colors and textures.
- Clutch size extremes range from the Northern Royal Albatross which lays one egg every two years to the Northern Bobwhite with up to 28 eggs. Cavity nesters have larger clutches than open nesters as do temperate nesters when compared with tropical nesters.
- Incubation periods are from 11 days, small songbirds and yellow-billed cuckoos and the longest 80 days for the Royal Albatross.
- Hatching is effected by the using the egg tooth to start the process of breaking the shell and then using a pipping muscle to make a 'zipper' around the shell from which the baby bird emerges. This process takes from 30 minutes for small passerines and up to 6 days for the albatross, with an average of 24 hours.
- Baby birds are either altricial or precocial. Altricial birds are born blind, mostly naked, possibly deaf, and need nursing. They develop a lot after hatching before they can leave the nest.
- Precocial and born able to walk, covered in down and can see. For them imprinting on a parent is essential as they will follow their parent(s) immediately for nursing and feeding themselves.
- Feeding – baby birds need to feed several times an hour at first, with longer periods between feeding as they mature. Most birds are fed mostly protein at this stage, except Cedar Waxwings which are fed fruit.
- Maturity. Generally the smaller the bird the faster it matures, with hummingbirds the fastest and raptors the longest.

The terminology for different stages of bird development is challenging and Kendra spent a lot of time researching it.

Hatchling – recently hatched.

Nestling – cannot fly and in nest growing feathers.

Pullus – young bird in the downy stage, cannot fly but not in nest.

Fledgling – capable of some flight (if only dropping to ground from a nest) – range from chicken in 18 days to albatross 278 -280 days.

Brancher – birds which crawl around on branches before being able to fly - Great Horned Owl becomes brancher at 40 days and flies at 45 – 49 days.

Independent – can fly and not dependent on parent for food or protection. This ranges from megapodes which are independent from day 1 to California Condors which take one year.

Some Australian and New Zealand birds have a very different process. Megapodes lay up to 50 eggs in a large, averaging 6 foot diameter and 3 foot high, mound of rotting vegetation and have no parental input once hatched. Kiwi eggs are one quarter of the mother's weight and babies are born fully feathered.

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