



Monthly Meeting January 8, 2017
Tracy Gee Community Center
3599 Westcenter Drive, Houston, TX

6:30 pm Christmas Bird Count Recap. A free raffle for bird-related items will be held. Please bring stories of cool birds and a tally of the CBC's you attended this year.

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

7:30 pm [Program](#): Big Year 2017 by David Sarkozi

[Field Trips](#): Brazoria County, Saturday, January 13, 6:45 am, led by Ron Weeks; Archbishop Foreza Park, Saturday, January 27, 8 am, led by Skip Almoney

[El Franco Lee Field Trip Report](#) | [Big Bills](#)
[Upcoming Texas Birding Events](#) (link to web page
2018 Dues are Due: <http://ornithologygroup.org/Dues>

Big Year 2017

By David Sarkozi

A travel log of David's adventures traveling 45,000 miles and finding over 500 species in Texas. Newly retired, David Sarkozi is about to complete his second Texas Big Year, which he has chronicled regularly in his public blog, "David's Big Year," at <http://davidsbigyear.blogspot.com/>. His most recent posting, on December 19, was a Black-legged Kittiwake, for year bird 502.

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Field Trips:

The following is a list of field trips through May 2018; it includes both regular and weekender trips. Due to the destruction along the Gulf coast and inland areas by Hurricane Harvey, we are holding a series of Weekender Fundraising Trips to help restore bird habitats that were lost to this devastating storm. These trips are open to all OG and TOS members. Non-members are also welcome for an additional \$10.

Brazoria County, Saturday, January 13, 6:45 am (includes San Bernard NWR, Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary, and Brazoria NWR)

Led by Ron Weeks

We will bird from 7 AM to 3 PM. Meet at 6:45 AM at TDECU at 1001 FM 2004. Bring walkie-talkies. Limited space available, sign up with Jean Booth – Ljeanbooth@aol.com.

We are excited to have Ron Weeks shows around Brazoria County again this year.

Ron has been an editor for North American Birds, is an NAS Christmas Bird Count compiler, and an e-Bird reviewer for many years. Ron has co-authored two books about Texas birds, A Birder's Guide to the Texas Coast and Birdlife of Houston, Galveston and the Upper Texas Coast. He is a festival guide for the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival and our local Galveston Featherfest. Ron works for Dow Chemical in Freeport and focuses in plastics R&D. Ron volunteers for Dow's annual Skimmer Day, which is an activity of Dow's Texas Operations Wildlife Support Team.

We will meet at 6:45 AM at TDECU (Texas Dow Employees Credit Union), located 1001 FM2004, which is located near the intersection of TX288 and FM2004 in Lake Jackson. Take TX288 south toward Lake Jackson and take the FM2004 exit and make a slight right on FM2004 for .69 mile. If you reach Lake Rd, you have gone a little too far. It is close to Brazos Mall.

We will start at San Bernard NWR looking at woodland (Bobcat Woods), waterfowl (Wolfweed Reservoir and Moist Soil units) and marsh (Moccasin Pond) birds, then move to Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary to look and gulls, terns, and shorebirds, and finish up at Brazoria NWR.

This trip will focus on rare birds found during the Christmas Bird Counts and any other special birds participants would like to see. Bring walkie-talkies and a lunch. Dress for the weather and bring boots (although we probably won't need them), warm clothes, sunscreen and mosquito spray. Bring binoculars and your scope and bird books. **Bring your smiley faces and remember birding etiquette practice** in consideration of the group and our guide. We will merge into fewer cars and leave some in their parking lot.

The field trip is limited to 15 participants, so sign up by emailing Ljeanbooth@aol.com – cell # 832 816 1060. Happy Holidays!

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Archbishop Forenza Park, Saturday, January 27, 8 am

Led by Skip Almoney

Come check out Skip's favorite "backyard". SKIPALM82@gmail.com.

Meet at 8:00 AM in parking lot near toilets.

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Austin Weekender Fundraiser, Saturday and Sunday, February 3-4.

Led by Deb and Lee Wallace

Cost: \$30 for TOS and OG members; \$40 for non-members.

Includes Hornsby bend and other favorites. The leaders have seen more than 450 species in Texas this year. We're excited for them to share their favorite spots.

Trip Coordinator: Teresa ConnellRSVP: (505) 380-7443; email teresaconnell@live.com

Carpooling available. We will be BBD (Birding by Car) with a maximum of 4 cars so that we all can get good views of the birds; 14 spaces available.

Overnight at the Austin Airport Hotel.

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San Jacinto Battleground, Saturday, February 10, 8 am

Led by Erik Ostrander

San Jacinto is Erik's backyard (he works for Texas Parks and Wildlife at San Jac.), so you are in for a treat!

Meet at 8:00 AM at northeast side of Monument, near the large green garbage cans.

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March Out of Texas (MOOT) trip and weekender Fundraiser, Saturday and Sunday, March 3-4

Cost: \$30; nonmember is \$40; 20 spaces available.

A grand trip to Louisiana's Cameron county see more than 100 species at the #2 Louisiana hotspot at the Peveto Woods – Baton Rouge Audubon Society Sanctuary at Holly beach. On Sunday, we visit Cameron Prairie NWR. These sites have nearly the same drive time as it takes to get to the Sabine woods. Carpooling is available and encouraged.

Hotel: Hackberry Mainstay Suites (337-762-3128): \$125/night AAA rate for two double beds.

Local Louisiana leader to be announced.

Trip Coordinator: Teresa Connell

RSVP: (505) 280-7443; teresaconnell@live.com

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Texas City Dike/Marathon Settling Ponds Peak Migration Trip, Saturday, March 31, 8 am

Led by Allen Hardee of Marathon Galveston Bay Refinery

Enjoy spring migration in Allen's backyard for a behind-the-scenes day of awesome birding. We will be birding by car and are limited to 5 cars so we all get good views. 16 spaces available. Meet at 8:00 AM at the parking lot on Bay Street near the restrooms.

Trip Coordinator: Teresa Connell

RSVP: (505) 280-7443; teresaconnell@limve.com

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Kerr County and Hill Country Extended Weekender and Fundraiser, April 6-8

Cost:\$50; nonmember is \$60; 20 spaces available.

Come see Kerr County and Hill Country favorites, such as the Golden-cheek Warbler and Black-capped Vireo. On Friday, Paul and Dolores will lead us to a trip to a fish hatchery known as the birdiest place in Kerr County. On Saturday, we visit South Llano River State Park. On Sunday, Richard Redmond will lead us through Lost Maples to complete our target birds. Carpooling is available and encouraged.

Trip Coordinator: Nina Rach; RSVP: (281) 433-0651; nina@autrevie.com

Reserve hotel at Mo Ranch Accommodations (contact Nina for details)

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Spring Migration, Saturday, April 21

Details to be announced later.

The Breeding Birds of Polk County, Saturday, May

Led by John Berner

Date and details to be announced later.

We will look for Swainson's Warbler, Prairie Warbler, and many more.

Pooling is available and encouraged.

Trip Coordinator: Teresa Connell

RSVP: (505) 280-7443; teresacConnell@limve.com

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El Franco Lee Field Trip Report, December 2

By Teresa Connell

Fourteen birders joined Larry Dybala as he led us on a 3-mile journey around El Franco Lee Park, where we saw a bunch of avian favorites, including the Red-shouldered Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, White Ibis, tri-color Herons, Great, Snowy, and Cattle Egrets, lots of various water fowl, and an unexpected sighting of a Bald Eagle that was being dive-bombed by an Osprey. Sparrows are more plentiful this winter, including swamp and song. We then headed to Stella Roberts Recycling Center where another Bald Eagle was majestically perched for our visual delight. Larry excelled by providing us with two Bald Eagles in a single day. The day finished with a flock of stunning White Pelicans, leaving everyone pleased with the perfect weather and excellent birding with 55 species counted.

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Big Bills

By Hart Rufe (Reprinted with permission from Hart Beat, first published December 3, 2017)

First published December 3, 2017



The local bird with the most unusual bill has to be the Roseate Spoonbill.



Bills are those charges and fees we receive requesting payment for goods and services. Sometimes they can be big. Or, bills may be those ones, fives and tens we carry in our wallets or purses. Sometimes folk may even carry Ben Franklins. And, as one with a first given name of “William,” I have occasionally wondered how “William” became “Bill.” With a “William” father and grandfather, both known as “Bill” (and now a son, “Bill,” as well), I realize I have always

been referred to by my middle name in order to avoid further family confusion. But during my working career I always used all three names, first, middle, and surname, even though no one ever referred to me as William or Bill, always my middle name: “Hart.” Actually, my grandfather, who died at age 96, was known as “Billy” to the very end. And, did you know that Billy Joel’s given name is William?



So, if we don’t know how “William” became “Bill,” can we do better figuring out why bird’s “beaks” are often called “bills?” Probably not. But there is no question that some of those bird bills are truly impressive.



Some of the bird species with the most impressive bills, such as some South American hummingbird species with bills bigger than the bird itself; or some toucans with enormous bills used for peeling and eating fruit; or some

African hornbills with huge protrusions on top of huge bills, are unlike any species found in North America. Nevertheless, we do have some species with impressive bills.

Of the species with up curved bills, two of the most impressive are the American Avocet (*above left*) and the Marbled Godwit (*right*). And while there are many species with down curved bills, from Dunlin to several species of Ibis, to Whimbrel, the clear champion in North America is the Long-billed Curlew (*left*), a western species that occurs most winters somewhere in Florida. Perhaps the most unique of all the bird’s bills is the short upper, over long lower, bill combination of the Black Skimmer (*below, left*), which enables the bird to plow the water for food with its lower bill, and snap it shut on contact with the shorter upper bill



when a tasty morsel is encountered.

The birds with the biggest bills though begin with the Woodstork (*right*) and proceed on to the two North American Pelicans, both found in Florida: the Brown and the American White (*below article*); and finish with my candidate for the biggest and most impressive: the Roseate Spoonbill. I invite you to add your impressive “big bill” suggestions to this list and I look forward to hearing from you.

Perhaps we did not solve either of the “Bill” for “William” or “bill” for “beak” riddles, but the consideration of these two questions should not result in any bills for goods or services, or require the removal of any bills from our wallets or purses. In today’s world, that in itself is a good thing.



For all, and more, than you ever wanted to know about bird’s beaks,

see: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beak>. For a suggested difference between bills and beaks, see: <https://theboard.byu.edu/questions/75204/>. For a conclusion that the terms “beaks” and “bills” are completely interchangeable,

see: <http://ornithology.com/beaks-bills/>. I found this collection of “big bill birds” after I had already made my selections: <https://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/animals/stories/15-birds-with-unbelievable-beaks>.



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About the Ornithology Group

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