



**Monthly Meeting May 6, 2019**  
**Bayland Community Center**  
**6400 Bissonnet St, Houston, TX**

6:30 pm [Ornithology Group \(OG\)](#) Annual Meeting and Elections

7:05 pm Program: [Spring Warbler Migration: From the Yucatan to Magee Marsh](#)  
[Ohio: Warbler Capital of the World by Glenn Olsen](#)

[Letter from the OG Chair](#) | [King Ranch Field Trip Report](#)  
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[Upcoming Texas Birding Events \(link to web page\)](#)  
[American Bird Conservancy Thank You Letter](#)  
[Hart Beat: Barbed Wire Birds \(link to web page\)](#)

## **Letter from the OG Chair**

It's Spring Migration! So many birds, so little time to see them all.

Please join us for the annual business meeting and elections for the Outdoor Nature Club (ONC) and the May 2019 monthly meeting of the Ornithology Group at Bayland Community Center in Houston. We will vote on every position, and are looking for volunteers to help with field trips, programs, outreach, communications, and advertising. Please step up and help to keep the organization and Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary running smoothly.

I would like to recognize Teresa Connell for the fabulous work she has done coordinating OG field trips; many different people have participated, enjoyed visiting new and old birding spots, and learned more about our Texas/Louisiana birds. Teresa will be relocating to Bakersfield, California in late May and we will miss her!

Thanks also to Harlan Evans for serving as our Treasurer and Larry Dybala for compiling The *Spoonbill* newsletter.

Remember that this is the final meeting of our 2018-2019 year; Meetings will resume on August 5 for the 2019-2020 year, after a nice summer break.

**Nina Rach**

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# **Spring Warbler Migration: From the Yucatan to Magee Marsh Ohio: Warbler Capital of the World**

by Glenn Olsen



Most of us birders know that many of the warblers leave the Yucatan Peninsula and stop at High Island where we see them during spring migration. However, fewer people know where they go after they leave High Island.

Only in the last few years have the words Magee Marsh and Black Swamp Bird Observatory made it into the birder's vocabulary. Part of the reason for this is a birding festival, but the most important reason is the warblers!

Seeing a tiny jewel of a warbler so close that you do not even need binoculars is a rare and breath taking encounter. With 29 species of warblers possible and many close encounters with these jewels, it is these experiences that are Magee Marsh's claim as the "warbler capital of the world".

In this presentation we will explore the hotspots for migration and birding at Black Swamp Bird Observatory, Magee Marsh, Maumee Bay State Park, and Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge.

Many birds occur here that we do not or are rarely see in Texas such as: Nesting Woodcock, Mute and Trumpeter Swans, American Black Duck, Common Merganser, Common Goldeneye, Greater, Canada Geese, Ringed-necked Pheasant, Black-billed Cuckoo, Great black-backed Gull, Black-capped Chickadee, American Tree Sparrow, Snow Bunting, Bobolink, and 29 species of warblers up close to name only a few of the 307 species that have been recorded in the region.

Another fun and interesting experience on the boardwalk will be the people. Birders are of all skill levels, of all ages, from all walks of life, and students are of all ages, and a wide variety of styles of dress. The people are just as varied as the birds and also fun to watch!

Glenn has been passionate about everything that crawled, crept, swam or flew since a child. All of Nature, but especially birds and plants inspire and enthuse him. He delights in sharing his passion for birds, plants, and the many other fascinating creatures of nature with others.

Glenn leads natural history and birding tours with GOBirding Ecotours to the hottest birding locations in the U.S., exotic locales such as the Galapagos Islands, the Amazon Rainforest, Ecuador, Costa Rica, and Honduras. His tours include aspects of the culture, ecology and natural history of the region.

His classes at Rice University's Glasscock School of Continuing Studies encompass the identification of birds, gardening for birds, butterflies and pollinators, sustainable landscaping, native plants and other nature related subjects. At Houston Audubon his classes focus on the identification of the many birds found in Texas. Classes at the Women's Institute of Houston focus on a broader range of the amazing aspects of nature. Glenn has completed the Master Naturalist course and gives classes for the program. Through his classes Glenn strives to help others connect or re-connect with nature and to inspire them to become active in birding, the outdoors, and conservation.

He has served on the board of Houston Audubon as Vice President of Education and as President of both the Houston Chapter and the statewide organization of the Native Plant Society of Texas. He co-founded Wildscapes Workshops, an event that for twenty years has celebrated the importance of native plants, pollinators, and birds.

Glenn has led field trips and/or given presentations for the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, Galveston FeatherFest, Rockport HummerBird Festival, Texas Ornithological Society, Houston Audubon, the Native Plant Society of Texas, WildScapes Workshops, the Katy Prairie Conservancy, Houston Arboretum, Fort Worth Audubon, and others.

Glenn grew up on a farm and was fascinated by birds, snakes, plants, and insects he found while roaming the fields and forest. While studying zoology in college he fell in love with Philosophy which suited his passion for learning and took his degree in that. Additionally, Glenn enjoys food, chocolate, photography, gardening, and reading on a diversity of subjects. Contact Glenn at [h.glenn.olsen@gmail.com](mailto:h.glenn.olsen@gmail.com) or 832-517-2478.

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## **King Ranch Field Trip Report**

**By Teresa Connell**

Leaders Barbara Rapstein and Whitney Lanfranco worked hard to make sure we saw as many species as we could on this weekender and a total of 108 species were seen and heard! Everyone on this trip went home extra happy because birding on the Encino division was a rare event since the land is leased and needed to be cleared for us on many different levels. Barbara gifted the group with a surprise, she called in the Ferruginous Pygmy-owl (only seen on Norias Division) we all heard it clearly. What a treat! We were a baker's dozen with 13 bird trippers eager to hop in the provided vans and enjoy the many acres the ranch gave us access to see and were split in two vans and had plenty of room to enjoy this trip. The first day 92 species were tallied up including favorites like Sprague's Pipit, White-tail Hawk, Merlin, Burrowing Owl, Fluvous Whistling-duck, Least Grebe, Grooved-bill Ani, Horned Lark, and Long-billed Thrasher, Olive Sparrow plus Valley specialties. At the Encino Division we saw favorites like Northern Bobwhite, Wild Turkey, White-tipped Dove, Cactus Wren, Grasshopper and Lark Sparrows, Lark Buntings, Green-tailed Towhee and great looks and calls of a Tropical Parula to finish the day. It was amazing to see so many species in different habitats, we all were thrilled by the time the trip ended at the Falfurrias Rest Stop before heading home.



I would like to Thank Glen Lindeman for helping me with registration and other details that helped this trip run smoothly. I also would like to Thank board members who attended Nina Rach, Jean Greenhalgh, and also Harlen Evans, Larry Dybala, Michael Honel for all the years of behind the scenes volunteer work that provide the backbone Ornithology Group needs to offer wonderful field trips and speakers to members.

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## **Red-vented Bulbul Census, June 1, 7:00 am – 9:00 am**

### **By Kendra Kocab**

In conjunction with the Houston Audubon Society's Citizen Science Committee, Fred Collins, Kendra Kocab, and Megan Ahlgren are organizing the 4th Annual Red-vented Bulbul Census, and we would like your help. The census will take place on **Saturday, June 1, from 7:00 AM to 9:00 AM** in the Heights and surrounding area. Last year's survey found 75 bulbuls. The birds should be actively nesting and feeding young at this time of year, making them easier to detect. We will cover the area via transects. Each person/pair will cover approximately 2 miles on foot. We would like to have people bird in pairs so as not to cause distress among people living



in the Heights when strangers with binoculars start peering into their yards on a Saturday morning.



One goal is to get an idea of the size of the population by recording as many bulbuls as possible at one time. We would also like to check some gaps in the area where no bulbuls have been reported on eBird. We hope to expand the survey to other areas of the city if we get additional observers.

If you are interested in participating in the census, please let us know as soon as possible so we can determine how many transects we can cover and if we have enough participants to expand the survey area. Tell us if you already have someone to pair up with. We are looking for people who can **identify bulbuls by sight and/or sound** and who can be cautious and respectful while birding in a neighborhood. If there are other people who meet these requirements, please let us know so we may contact them as well.

After 9:00 AM, we will meet at BB's Café, 701 White Oak Dr. Houston 77008 to do a countdown. We will contact all of those interested in participating soon with information on which transects they will be birding and how to conduct the survey.

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# Minutes of April 1, 2019 Meeting

by Jean Greenhalgh

The program was Beach-Nesting Bird and Shorebird Conservation on the Texas Coast presented by Kristen Vale, the Texas Coastal Program Coordinator for American Bird Conservancy. Kristen has been with ABC for six years and was the speaker at OG's October 2017 meeting.



An earlier donation from OG has enabled ABC to buy signs and fencing for beach-nesting bird sites.

Some non-breeding activities are carried out which help birds and management during the breeding season. In 2016 ABC and Fish and Wildlife started bird surveys, including weekly surveys by bike, of back bay marshes along the coast, which enable reports and recommendations to managers of different coastal locations and habitats.

Breeding season activities include putting string around the entire perimeter of nesting sites and installing signs. This has stopped a lot of the trespassing at many sites. However, coyotes at

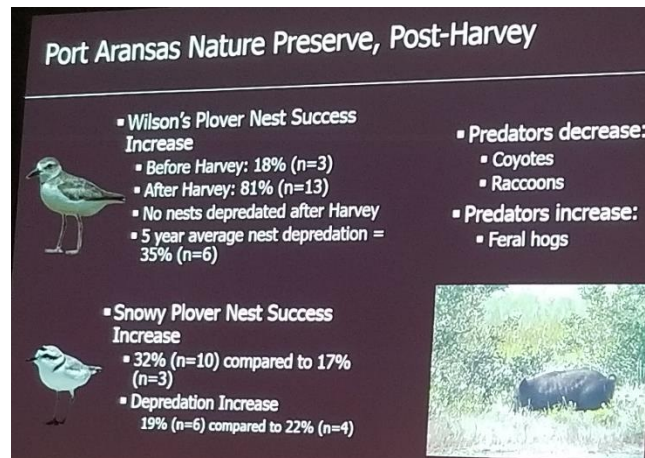
Galveston's East Beach like to chew and break the string leading to replacement throughout the season.

Clearing plastic and other trash is also undertaken.

At San Luis Pass police clear the dunes of ATVs.

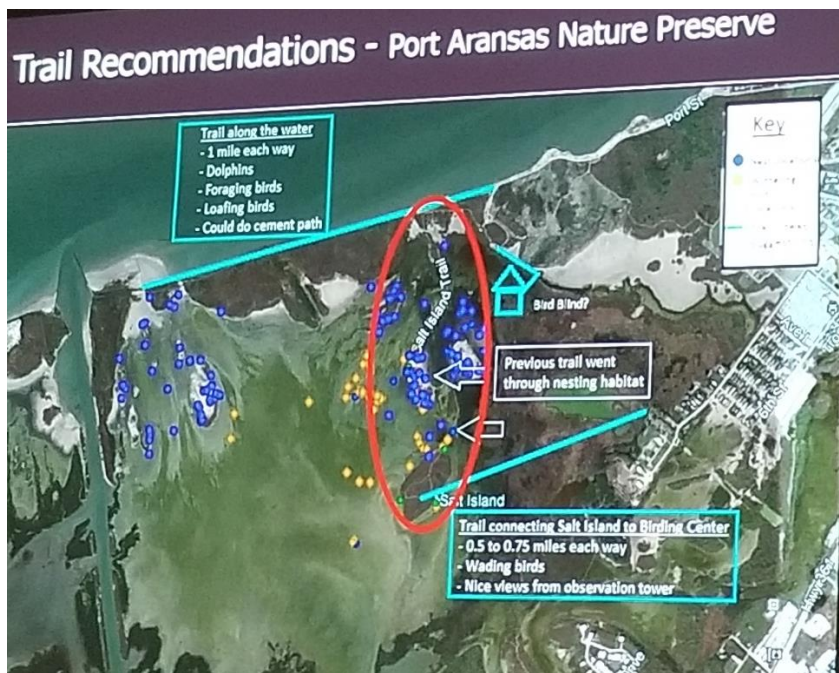
Kristen then talked about the effects of Hurricane Harvey. It changed the beaches and vegetation in breeding areas. Bird nesting requirements range from nesting in areas of mostly sand with almost no vegetation to those nesting in dense vegetation both on the flat and in the dunes. Reproductive rates have changed dramatically over the last couple of years in some areas.

Packery Flats at Corpus Christi had a major problem with off-leash dogs being walked in the area and fishermen walking over the area. Fences installed for the 2018 season around the breeding areas were very successful and did not curtail fishing or dog-walking, just re-directed these activities to specific, non-nesting, areas.



At Port Aransas Nature Preserve, often referred to as Charlies Pasture, Harvey pushed water into the ship channel on the bay side and salt water inundated the preserve. This killed some of the vegetation, killed some of the predators and dropped silt and sand and this helped nesting birds as shown in the above statistics. It also destroyed the entrance road, the structures and the boardwalks. These have not been repaired yet and ABC has put forward a plan to change the location of the boardwalks. These had formerly gone through the middle of nesting areas, disturbing some birds, and would now go around the areas and connect with the Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center's newly restored boardwalks.





Boca Chica bird wintering and breeding areas are being monitored. These may be affected by both the proposed border wall and the SpaceX launch pad. There should be two weeks' notice of road closures for every launch.

Bolivar Peninsular. Vegetation increases quickly in wet years which is a problem for some species. However dry seasons can kill the vegetation which can help some species. Harvey increased the beach area in some places.

Breeding bird surveys, below, show how changes in vegetation and habitat have led to the movement of species from one nesting area to another.



Bolivar Flats / East Beach					
Reproductive Metric	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
# Breeding pairs	30 / 15	32 / 17	19 / 10	8 / 20	6 / 18
Hatched Nests	21 / 8	8 / 7	10 / 9	1 / 12	1 / 15
Failure – Predation	4 / 0	9 / 7	11 / 2	3 / 6	2 / 4
Failure – Washout	4 / 2	19 / 13	3 / 1	8 / 12	3 / 0
Failure – Abandonment	1 / 0	0 / 1	1 / 0	0 / 1	0 / 0
Failure – Human-Caused	1	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0	0 / 0
Failure – Unknown	8 / 3	18 / 1	14 / 5	2 / 5	1 / 3
# Fledges	11 / 7	4 / 6	7 / 7	0 / 3	1 / 22
Productivity (fledges/pair)	0.37 / 0.47	0.13 / 0.35	0.37 / 0.70	0.0 / 0.15	0.17 / 1.22

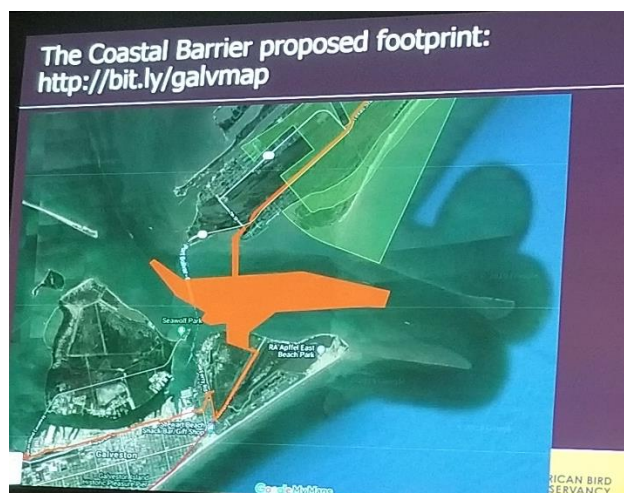
  

Reproductive Metric	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
# Breeding pairs	3	5	3	3	3
Hatched Nests	4	1	0	2	2
Failure – Predation	0	6	1	0	0
Failure – Washout	1	3	0	2	0
Failure – Abandonment	0	0	0	0	1
Failure – Human-Caused	0	0	0	0	0
Failure – Unknown	0	0	0	1	1
# Fledges	3	0	1*	0	2
Productivity (fledges/pair)	1.00	0.00	0.33	0.00	0.66

Reproductive Metric	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
# Breeding pairs	80 / 63	54 / 95	51 / 62	137 / 50	120 / 39
# Fledges	9 / 24	3 / 3	10 / 7	11 / 0	19 / 2
Productivity (fledges/pair)	0.11 / 0.38	0.06 / 0.03	0.20 / 0.11	0.08 / 0.0	0.16 / 0.05

Galveston East Beach and Bolivar peninsular now face a new challenge. There are plans for a Coastal Barrier with a 17 foot high levee from High Island to San Luis Pass and a barrier “gate” in the Houston Ship Channel between Galveston and Bolivar. On Galveston Island this would be along the bay side from the Bolivar ferry to Moody Gardens then cut south to FM 3005 and follow this on the bay side to San Luis Pass. On the Bolivar Pensinsular it is proposed on the bay side of Hwy 87, ending at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in High Island. This will cause major problems for birds moving from the beach to the dunes. Studies and information come from the Texas General Land Office and details are available at [coastalstudy/Texas.gov](http://coastalstudy/Texas.gov). A map of the full length of the levees and barrier is at [//bit.ly/galvmap](http://bit.ly/galvmap)



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## **Ornithology Group Officers**

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

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