

# The Spoonbill

A Publication of the Ornithology Group  
of the Houston Outdoor Nature Club

October 2020

Welcome to the beginning of fall! Although Bayland Community Center has reopened, in an abundance of caution, we will once again use the Zoom online platform for our October 5 meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://utexas.zoom.us/j/95325148018> Meeting ID: 953 2514 8018  
The Zoom lobby will open at 6:45pm for check-in, and the meeting will begin at 7:00pm.

The program, **“Peeps and Pipers”** (Sandpipers in Texas) will be presented by Glenn Olsen

Shorebirds are a beautiful and interesting family of birds. Some birds are very distinctive and their identification is straightforward. However, the peeps and pipers offer a more interesting challenge to our identification skills.

In this presentation we will examine this group within the larger family and explore the features, characteristics, and behaviors that will guide us in our efforts to identify these challenging and sometimes tough individual birds. We will begin with some of the challenging but less difficult sandpipers and how to sort them out. Such as non-breeding Dunlin, Western, Baird’s and White-rumped sandpipers. Then we move on to those notorious species known as “peeps.” We will review the differences and similarities of the Western, Least, and Semi-palmated Sandpipers to enable us to distinguish these three species. Contact Glenn at [h.glenn.olsen@gmail.com](mailto:h.glenn.olsen@gmail.com) or 832-517-2478.

Glenn Olsen leads birding tours with GOBirding Ecotours and teaches bird identification, gardening for birds and butterflies, and nature related classes through Rice University's Continuing Studies Department, Houston Audubon, Katy Prairie Conservancy, and the Texas Master Naturalist program. He has served on the Houston Audubon Board as Vice President of Education. Glenn co-founded the Wildscapes Workshop through the Native Plant Society of Texas (NPSOT) where he served as president of the Houston Chapter and the State NPSOT. He has led field trips and/or presented programs for the Texas Ornithological Society, Houston Audubon, Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, Galveston FeatherFest, Rockport Hummer/Bird Festival, Houston Arboretum, the Native Plant Society and others. Glenn has led trips to the exotic locales of Ecuador, the Galapagos Islands, Amazon Rainforest, Costa Rica and the hottest birding locations in the U.S.



Least Sandpiper at Estero Llano, by Nina Rach

**October Trivia Q: Name the only species of Tanager that regularly breeds in the continental U.S.**  
(Answer is at the very end)

### Membership

If you have not yet renewed your membership, please do so.  
We are all volunteers, but the ONC/OG has continuing expenses.

OG single membership \$20, Family \$30, or consider once-in-a-lifetime ONC dues! Life membership \$250, Patron \$500, Founder \$1000, or Benefactor \$5000.

Please make checks payable to “Outdoor Nature Club” and mail to:  
Outdoor Nature Club, P.O. Box 1014, Bellaire, TX 77402-1014



Summer Tanager male (L) & Red-bellied Woodpecker female (R) at Bear Creek. Photos by Rusti Stover

### OG Field Trip report, Saturday, 3 Oct 2020 to Bear Creek Park – by Nina Rach

Our first field trip of the fall!

Many thanks to Drew Dickert, who led a 5.5 hour field trip to see 52 bird species in wonderful weather (55° at 7:30am start; only 81° at finish), under blue skies.

After meeting at the Equestrian parking lot off Bear Creek Drive at Golbow Drive, eight of us easily maneuvered the wet ground in our mud boots, and we covered about 8 miles (including driving between locations). Jim Hinson joined us toward the end to walk us through his Mourning Warbler spot on the southeastern edge of the (increasingly wild) golf course.



Species seen: Black-bellied Whistling-duck, Rock Pigeon, Mourning Dove, Chimney Swift, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Killdeer, Solitary Sandpiper, Neotropic Cormorant, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Cattle Egret, Green Heron, White Ibis, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-headed Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Flicker (that's 25)...



More species seen at Bear Creek: a Tyrant flycatcher (maybe Greater Pewee? Or Olive-sided?), Least Flycatcher, White-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Tree Swallow, Cave Swallow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Red-breasted Nuthatch (HO), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Carolina Wren, European Starling, Eastern Bluebird (photo at right by Rusti Stover), American Robin, House Finch, Lincoln's Sparrow, Common Grackle, Orange-crowned Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Palm Warbler, Pine Warbler, Summer Tanager, Northern Cardinal, and Indigo Bunting (that's 52).

Bear Creek Pioneers Park covers 2154 acres in western Harris County (Precinct 3), north of I-10, between Highway 6 and North Eldridge Parkway.



Map: [http://www.pct3.com/Portals/45/docs/map/bear\\_creek.pdf](http://www.pct3.com/Portals/45/docs/map/bear_creek.pdf)

### **North Dakota Piping Plover found in Texas – by Tira Overstreet**

On September 4 I was birding on the beach at Pass Cavallo [off Port O'Connor; connects Matagorda Bay with the Gulf of Mexico] and found a **Piping Plover** wearing "jewelry" in the form of a yellow tag and five small leg bands. I was able to crouch low and photograph the bird at close distance and in good light. When I got the pictures on my computer I found I could read the number on the yellow tag and see the colors of the bands even though I hadn't used a scope.



Piping Plover photos by Tira Overstreet

I found the appropriate website which had instructions for reporting the tags and sent them in with these pictures. I also asked that if the recipient had time, to please send me information about the banding sight and time.

My report was as follows:

"I photographed a Piping Plover at Pass Cavallo Texas beach in Calhoun County Texas on September 4, 2020. The approximate location is (28.3746793, -96.3865217).

The Upper Right had a yellow flag with the code L81.

The Lower Right Upper was Black

The Lower Right Lower was White

The Upper Left was an Aluminum band

The Lower Left Upper was Light Blue

The Lower Left Lower was Bright (dark?) Blue

Photos are attached."



Piping Plover photo by Tira Overstreet

I got the following response:

These are great photos! Your patience paid off. I am happy to tell you the banding history of this bird. L81 was banded as an adult on Lake Sakakawea near New Town, ND May 2014. The last known sighting of this bird was on Lake Sakakawea in 2018. This is a great find! I am very glad to hear L81 is still kickin'! Three years without a sighting I would have thought this bird was dead.

Thanks, ~Megan Ring

Tern and Plover Team

US Geological Survey-Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center

[npwrc.ternplover@usgs.gov](mailto:npwrc.ternplover@usgs.gov)

8711 37th St SE, Jamestown, ND 58401

For birders interested in doing the same, it is worth looking at the website before sending in a report, because it has a chart explaining where to send the report depending on the color of the tag with the readable letters and numbers (yellow, red, etc.) and a picture showing the tag positions for correct reporting.

Here is the website link to the USFW Northeast Region:

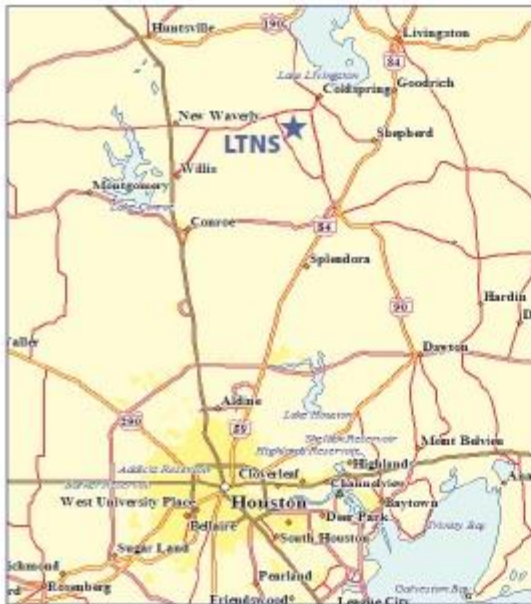
[https://www.fws.gov/northeast/pipingplover/report\\_bands.html](https://www.fws.gov/northeast/pipingplover/report_bands.html)

\*\*\*\*\*

**Ornithology Group Fall 2020 Field Trips – more details on our FaceBook page! Wear a mask.**

Sat, Oct 3 – **Bear Creek Park** with Drew Dickert. Sunrise 7:16, meet at 7:30am at Equestrian Lot.

Sat, Oct 24 – Birding at **Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary**, 2001 FM 945, Cleveland, San Jacinto County with Nina Rach and John Berner. Take I-59 to Cleveland, left onto 2025, drive 5 miles and turn left onto 945 (heading north). After 11 miles you will see the LTNS sign on the right. Sunrise will be at 7:30am (still DST). Meeting time TBD. Contact Nina if you plan to join us.



Sat, Nov 14 – **Cullinan Park**, Sugar Land, with Robbin Mallett and other local volunteers.

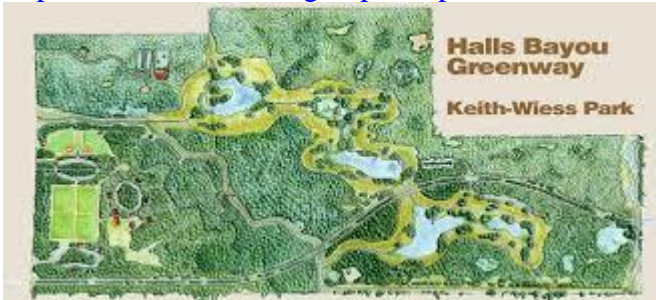
Sunrise 6:46am (DST ends on Nov 1). <https://www.cullinanparkconservancy.org/birding>

Trail map: <https://www.cullinanparkconservancy.org/maps>

Tues, Dec 1 – **Keith-Wiess Park**, 12300 Aldine Westfield Rd, with Nina Rach & Tira Overstreet.

Sunrise 7:00am, Meeting time TBD. <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L463084> ,

<https://www.houstontx.gov/parks/parksites/keithwiesspark.html>



Upcoming field trips... will be led by Allen Hardee (Marathon Land Farm, Galveston County), John Berner (Waller County) and others. Have suggestions? Want to help organize a trip? Let us know.



**Local birding events** – please wear a mask

**Baytown Nature Center Monthly Bird Count, Harris County** – Third Thursdays: Oct 15 & Nov 19, meet David Hanson & Chuck Davis at 8:00am in the parking lot behind the entrance building.

**Smith Point Hawk Watch, Chambers County, Aug 15-Nov 30** – Sponsored by the GCBO and other organizations, there are special rules for 2020 COVID-19 birding. See:

<https://www.gcbo.org/avian-research-and-monitoring/smith-point-hawk-watch/>

**Seabourne Creek Nature Park, Rosenberg, Fort Bend County** - Weekly Wednesday Bird Walks - Beginning Oct 7, meet at 8:00am. <https://rosenbergtx.gov/seabourn-creek/>

**Kleb Woods Nature Preserve, Tomball, Harris County** – Wed morning bird walks, 8:30am-11:30am. Kleb Woods staff also run First Saturday bird walks, 8-10am (Oct 3, Nov 7, Dec 5) and Senior (50+) Fri. bus trips on Oct 9 (Brazos Bend State Park) and Nov 13 (Orange County).

**John Paul Landing Environmental Education Center**, 9950 Katy-Hockley Rd, Katy, Harris County – Thursday morning bird walks 8:30am-11:30am

### **Global Birding Weekend, Oct 17-18, 2020**

“Birding Together for Conservation,” is organized by BirdLife International, a global partnership of non-governmental organizations that strives to conserve birds and their habitats. Register at <https://globalbirding.org/> and use eBird to participate.



### **Volunteer Opportunities!**

The **Ornithology Group** needs a Newsletter Editor for The Spoonbill.

Enjoy our field trips? We really could use a Field Trip Coordinator to insure that they continue!

The OG Vice-Chair (**your name here**) is in charge of arranging our monthly speakers – consider volunteering and trying this out for a year!

The **Outdoor Nature Club**, which is the nonprofit educational and scientific organization of which the Ornithology Group is a part, has four board positions, all of which are filled for two-year terms.

In even-numbered years (2020) we vote on the Sanctuaries VP, and Secretary/Treasurer. Charles Peterson is currently our Sanctuaries VP, and Connie Blakley is our Secretary/Treasurer.

In odd-numbered years (2021), we vote on President and Membership VP.

We normally hold an election in May, but that was not possible this year due to Covid-19, and so we have sent out mail ballots this month. Please return your pre-stamped response card by Oct 23, and we will announce the results in the November issue of the Spoonbill.



## Texas State Parks Status

Almost all Texas State Parks are open, although access and hours may be limited, and camping still closed at some. The following are closed: Balmorhea SP (Toyahvale), Indian Lodge (Fort Davis), and Wyler Aerial Tramway (El Paso). See <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/parks-map>

## Texas' National Parks status, October 1

**Big Bend National Park** is mostly open; see below. But the Chisos Basin Lodge & restaurant and all visitor centers are closed, along with the Rio Grande Village Campground, Cottonwood Campground, and the Boquillas Crossing Port of Entry.

On Sept 15, the Chisos Basin Campground reopened, with groups limited to 8 people, and reservations must be booked through [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) [No first-come-first-served camping allowed] The Rio Grande also opened for river trips from paved access points. Backcountry permits are once again available for overnight river trips (\$10/night), up to 7 days in advance, at Chisos Basin and Panther Junction outdoor kiosks.

All park roads (paved and gravel) are now open. All hiking trails are open, except for the Hot Springs Historic District and associated trails. Backcountry camping is allowed in the Chisos and at designated primitive roadside sites; you must obtain a permit through [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) to use any campsite.

See: <https://www.nps.gov/bibe/planyourvisit/big-bend-covid-19-status-updates.htm>



**Guadalupe Mountains National Park** has reopened the following trails and areas: Pine Springs Campground (!), Pinery Nature Trail, Devil's Hall Trail, Guadalupe Peak Trail, McKittrick Canyon, Smith Springs Loop Trail (one-way traffic), Frijole Ranch Area (Ranch House will remain closed), and Salt Basin Dunes Area

This is a positive step and we hope to see Dog Canyon (trails, campground, and contact station) reopen soon, along with the regular public restrooms, back-country access, Williams Ranch, and the Pine Springs Visitor Center.

See: <https://www.nps.gov/gumo/guadalupe-mountains-national-park-covid-19-status-updates.htm>

## 24<sup>th</sup> Great Texas Birding Classic

For the first time ever, this spring event has moved to the fall due to the public health crisis. Coinciding with the fall migration, the GTBC is perfect for novice birders and nature lovers who want to get outside and take part in the competition.

Tournament Dates: October 1-31, 2020 (choose 1 day)

[Registration](#) Deadline: September 14, 2020

[Conservation Grant](#) Deadline: October 1, 2020

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/events/great-texas-birding-classic>

⇒ Do we have any OG/ONC members participating?

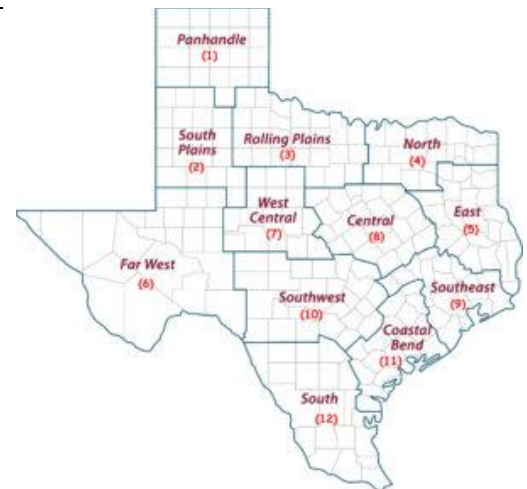


---

## Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

AgriLife has 12 service districts to cover the state. It helps administer the Texas Master Naturalist program, runs a few birding programs and disseminates quite a lot of bird-related information.

Info: <https://agrilifetoday.tamu.edu/2020/09/01/agrilife-extensions-2021-birding-the-border-open-for-registration/>



## Birding the Border, April 29-May 2, 2021

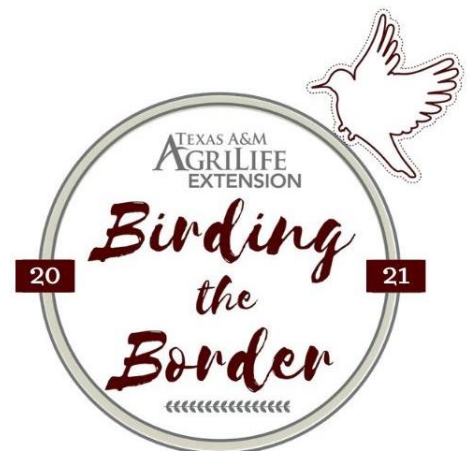
Registration is open for this 4-day event, based at the **Del Rio** Civic Center. \$50 registration includes educational programs and a kickoff social at Val Verde Winery (the oldest bonded winery in Texas, with olive groves).

There are 3 days of birding trips (separate fees) to a mix of private, restricted access, and public lands in Kinney and Val Verde counties, in the central flyway.

Three different ecoregions are covered: Edwards Plateau, South Texas Plains, and Chihuahuan Desert.

Target species include: Golden-cheeked Warbler, Black-capped Vireo, White-collared Seedeater, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Elf Owl, and all three species of kingfisher.

There are options for photography-focused and novice birder trips, too!





## Birding Webinars

Mauritius & South Africa-based Rockjumper is offering a very exciting and diverse set of guide-led webinars, the 'Dream Destinations' series, every Wednesday, 11am CST. Register: <https://www.rockjumperbirding.com/webinars/>



**Upcoming Zoom webinars** (each tour is one-hour long):

Oct 7 – **Antarctica**, with David Tanguay from Quark Expeditions (logistics for polar travel)

Oct 14 – **Travel Insurance**, with Uriah Jansen, Oojah Travel Protection

Oct 21 – **Japan**

Oct 28 – **Argentina**

Nov 4 – **South Africa**

Nov 11 – **Spain**

**Rockjumper** posts these programs on their website for future viewing as well. Enjoy these recordings:

June 10 – **Sri Lanka**, with Stephan Lorenz [34 endemics + nearly 20 near-endemics]

June 17 – **Hummingbirds**, with Forrest Rowland

June 24 – **Bhutan**, with Daniel Danckwerts

July 1 – **Remote West Papuan Islands**, with Glen Valentine

July 8 – **Serengeti & Ngorongoro Crater, Tanzania**, with Adam Riley [Rockjumper Founder]

July 15 – **Kruger National Park, South Africa**, with Greg de Klerk [500+ species]

July 22 – **Papua New Guinea**, with Adam Walley

July 29 – **Cuba**, with Clayton Burne

Aug 5 – **Zambia**, with Daniel Danckwerts

Aug 12 – **Ethiopia**, with Nigel Redman

Aug 19 – **Mexico**, with Lev Frid [1100+ species]

Aug 26 – **Northern Peru**, with Rob Williams [1800+ species]

Sept 2 – **Brazil's Pantanal**, with Stephan Lorenz

Sept 9 – **Israel**, with Yoav Perlman

Sept 16 – **Antarctica**, with Adam Walley – the birds!

Sept 23 – **Colombia**, with Forrest Rowland [nearly 2000 species] - *not yet online*

Sept 30 – **Uganda**, with David Hoddinott [550+ species]

## Upcoming Ornithology Group meetings (Monday evenings, on Zoom for now)

Nov 2 – Program: “**Birding in Tasmania**,” by Teresa Connell & Billi Wagner

Dec 7 – Program: “**Birds and More in Southeast Asia**,” by Kendra Kocab

Jan 4 – Program: “**Owls in Minnesota**,” by David Bradford

## Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary Open Days (Saturdays) in Fall 2020:

⇒ **October 24 (OG birding field trip)**, and December 5

## Ornithology Group - [www.OrnithologyGroup.org](http://www.OrnithologyGroup.org)

Chair	Nina Rach	Nina.Rach@yahoo.com
<b>Vice-chair (Programs)</b>	- <b>OPEN – interesting job!</b>	<b>Your email here!</b>
<b>Field Trips</b>	- <b>OPEN – fun job!</b>	<b>Your email here!</b>
Secretary	Jean Greenhalgh	Jeanbrit01@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Harlan Evans	HarlanJ42@sbcglobal.net
Membership	Michael Honel	MichaelHonel@sbcglobal.net
<b>The Spoonbill Editor</b>	- <b>OPEN</b> – temporarily Nina -	Nina.Rach@yahoo.com
ONC Board Rep.	Tira Overstreet	Oddbird47@comcast.net

### Trivia Q answer:

**Morelet’s Seedeater** (previously White-collared Seedeater), *Sporophila moreletti*, is the only species of Tanager (family Thraupidae) that breeds in the continental United States. The only other true Tanagers seen in the continental U.S. are vagrant, and do not breed here: Crimson-collared Grosbeak (TX vagrant), Bananaquit (FL vagrant), Yellow-faced Grassquit (TX, FL vagrant), and Black-faced Grassquit (FL vagrant).

Trick question, you say? Looks like a finch, you say? What we call “Tanagers” in the U.S. (Hepatic, Summer, Scarlet, Western, and Flame-colored) are in the genus *Piranga*, which has been reassigned to the Cardinal family

(<http://checklist.americanornithology.org/taxa/3008> )



♂ MOSE in Laredo, Photo by N. Rach