



The Spoonbill

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

November 2020

Greetings! Although Bayland Community Center has reopened, in an abundance of caution, we will once again use the Zoom online platform for our November 2 meeting.

The program:
“**Wild Tasmania, with Queensland
& Victoria highlights,**”

will be presented by Teresa Connell. She will introduce Tasmania’s endemic bird species, Marsupials, Gondwana gardens, and more! Join us to learn about the wild splendor that the world’s 26th largest island has to offer, in addition to highlights from eastern Australia.

At right: Teresa and parrots; three King Parrots (*Alisterus scapularis*) and a Crimson Rosella (*Platycercus elegans*)

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://utexas.zoom.us/j/99352204453>

The Zoom lobby will open at 6:45pm for check-in, and the meeting will begin at 7:00pm.

You need to have set up a free Zoom account in order to access.



November Trivia Q: If a goose actually laid a golden egg, how much would the egg be worth?

What is your ballpark estimate? (Answer is at the very end)



OG Field Trip report, Saturday, 24 Oct 2020 to the LTNS – by Nina Rach

Our second field trip of the fall!

It was overcast and 58 degrees when ten of us gathered in the Cove at ONC's Little Thicket Sanctuary, which includes nearly 700 acres in San Jacinto County. We walked more than three miles, following a clockwise triangle through the center of the sanctuary, first to the meadow at Martin Flat (photo above), then north on Park Road to the meadows at King's Hill (where a fleeting glance at what might have been a Brown Creeper eluded our search). We headed east, following Beech Tree Rd, to the Bird Trail, which took us to the suspension bridge and meadow at the Triangle, then back to the Cove along Middle Road.

Species encountered at LTNS:

Turkey Vulture, Red-shouldered Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay, American Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, House Wren, Carolina Wren, Gray Catbird, Hermit Thrush, Orange-crowned Warbler, Pine Warbler, Northern Cardinal, and Indigo Bunting.

John Berner, who was co-leading in the morning, continued on with part of the group to Lake Run-a-Muck, on the east side of Shepherd, where they found a Common Gallinule and other birds.

Time to Renew Membership for 2021

If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2021, please do so. We are all volunteers, but the ONC/OG has continuing expenses.

OG/ONC 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



Birding Alpha Codes

If you want to keep shorthand field notes, it's useful to know the four-letter (English Name) and Six-letter (Scientific Name) Alpha Codes. As taxonomy changes, so will the alpha codes.

Example from last month's birding quiz:

White-Collared SEedeater, *Sporophila torqueola*, used to be WCSE and SPOTOR but is now known as:

MORElet's SEedeater, *Sporophila moreletti* and is now abbreviated MOSE and SPOMOR

Peter Pyle and David F. DeSante, at The Institute for Bird Populations, www.birdpop.org, tabulate **2158** Bird Species (and 108 Non-Species Taxa) in accordance with the 61st AOU Supplement (2020),

The Bird Codes app, launched in 2012 and updated in 2017, by Nemesis Code, allows you to search and learn the alpha codes created using the Pyle and DeSante (2003) system which defines alpha codes for 2078 species recorded in the AOU (American Ornithologists' Union) area (80 sp. short of 2020 update)

1. http://www.birdpop.org/docs/misc/Alpha_codes_eng.pdf
2. <https://mobirds.smugmug.com/Pages/Species-Alpha-Codes/n-X8kKX9>

Global Birding Weekend, Oct 17-18, 2020

“Birding Together for Conservation,” was organized by BirdLife International, a global partnership of non-governmental organizations that strives to conserve birds and their habitats. <http://globalbirding.org>

➔ Results: **7037 species** worldwide on Oct 17!
<https://ebird.org/octoberbigday>



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

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> ** Meet at 8:00am **

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), Ron Weeks (Brazoria 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: 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 (Nov 7, Dec 5) and Senior (50+) Fri. bus trips; next is 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

Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary Open Day (Saturday): December 5

Christmas Bird Counts – Dec 14, 2020 to Jan 5, 2021

Information and decisions are delayed due to the COVID crisis. Most dates and times will be announced after Nov 15. <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>

Dec 19 (Sat) – Spring Creek CBC (TXSC) will cover The Woodlands, Mercer/Pundt Park, Jones State Forest, & Hooks Airport. Compiler: Claire Moore, cdmoore3i@gmail.com

Two Great Volunteer Opportunities and Results of 2020 ONC election

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

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 voted on the Sanctuaries and ONC Secretary/Treasurer positions.

About 6 weeks ago, Connie Blakley mailed out envelopes containing self-addressed, stamped response ballot cards. Michael Honel counted the response cards. We have 67 votes in favor of **Charles Peterson** to continue to serve as **Executive Director of Sanctuaries**, and **Connie Blakley** to continue to serve as **ONC Secretary/Treasurer**. Congratulations and thank you, Charles and Connie!

Good News from Ecuador!

Ecuador's Galapagos National Park says that populations of the archipelago's penguins (*Spheniscus mendiculus*) and **Flightless Cormorants** (*Phalacrocorax harrisi*) have seen a record increase since 2019, reaching the highest levels since 2006. Galapagos Penguins are the only penguin species found north of the Equator. Their population has grown from 1451 in 2019 to 1940 this year. The Flightless Cormorant population (found on Fernandina and Isabela) has increased from 1914 to 2220 over the same period. The park says La Niña conditions have helped provide more food for both species.





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

Big Bend National Park is partially open; Chisos Basin Campground and Rio Grande Village Campground are now open at 2/3 capacity but still require advance reservations. Backcountry camping and river trips allowed, with permits. Chisos Basin Lodge has reopened, with limited availability.

Still closed as of Nov. 2: Chisos Basin restaurant, Cottonwood Campground, Hot Springs & associated trails, all park visitor centers, Rio Grande Village gas station, and Boquillas Crossing Port of Entry.

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

Guadalupe Mountains National Park has reopened most trails and facilities as of October 18, including both Pine Springs and Dog Canyon Campgrounds. Group camping remains closed.

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

TPWD: **Ducks You'll Find in Texas**



The Lone Star State has both year-round, resident ducks, as well as migrant visitors that winter here. All wild species of ducks are considered migratory game birds and are protected (regulated) by state and federal laws.

Find out more about puddle and diving ducks in Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's 2-minute video, [Ducks](#).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEysYeRh8PY>

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

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

Jan 4 – Program: “**Owls & other birds of Sax-Zim Bog, Minnesota**,” by David Bradford

Feb 1 – Program: “**Corvids-The Amazing Crow Family**,” by Scott Kiester

March 1 – Program: “**Birding Northeast Brazil**,” by Lisa Li

Webinars – Partnership for International Birding (PIB, <http://www.pibird.com>)

– suggested by Lisa Li

PIB is run by a group of international bird guides. Their logo is the Pennant-winged Nightjar, *Caprimulgus vexillarius*, an African species that breeds in moist savanna and broadleaved woodlands, especially miombo forest across East Africa.



Upcoming PIB webinars (using Zoom) – register for these in advance to watch live

Nov 5 (Thurs, 9:30am CST) – **Northeast India**, with Leio & Jennifer De Souza

Nov 11 (Wed, 9:00am CST) - **Ecuador Birding Favorites: Northwest and East Slope of Andes**, with Lelis Navarrete

Nov 18 (Wed, 9:30am CST) – **Sri Lanka Birding**, with Dulan Ranga Vidanapathirana

Jan 28, 2021 (Thurs, 12 noon CST) – **Writing the Field Guide to the Birds of Ecuador**, with Lelis Navarrete

Archived videos from PIB, <https://www.facebook.com/PartnershipforInternationalBirding>

“**The Birds of New Zealand**,” with Sav Saville, <https://youtu.be/ibb76UfyIpA>
Sav's Tales of New Zealand Birding from Kiwis to New Zealand Storm Petrel (rediscovery)

“**Papua New Guinea: Birding in Paradise**,” with Leio De Souza, <https://youtu.be/KZK7PccTk8M>

“**Alaska Birding Favorites**,” with David Trently (Sept 18), <https://youtu.be/IysO6RchJZQ>

“**Hawaii Part 1: Learning to Pronounce Hawaiian Bird Names (endemics)**,” with Mandy Talpas (Sept 9), <https://youtu.be/WdWhyRZixeo>

“**Birding in Uganda's Fantastic National Parks**,” with Johnnie Kamugisha, <https://youtu.be/70B3F1jYV5g>

“**Essential Perú Birding in the Manu Biosphere Reserve & Machu Picchu**,” with José Antonio Padilla, <https://www.facebook.com/PartnershipforInternationalBirding/videos/1221530884860163>

“**Birding in Guatemala**,” with Ana Paula Oxom, <https://www.facebook.com/PartnershipforInternationalBirding/videos/3357915540927554>

“**Birding across India**,” with Qupeleio (Leio) & Jennifer De Souza, <https://www.facebook.com/PartnershipforInternationalBirding/videos/937248553460821>

“**Birding at the Crossroads of America: Panama**,” with Guido Berguido, <https://www.facebook.com/PartnershipforInternationalBirding/videos/213327646626096>

“**Costa Rica Birding: Key Habitats and Birding Regions**,” with Juan Diego Vargas, <https://www.facebook.com/PartnershipforInternationalBirding/videos/3783721948321882>

“**Newfoundland Birding: Coastal Seabird Colonies & Boreal Forests**,” with David Trently, <https://www.facebook.com/PartnershipforInternationalBirding/videos/1043960659334096>

Ornithology Group - www.OrnithologyGroup.org

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<p>November Trivia Q answer, by Nina:</p> <p>If a goose actually laid a golden egg, how much would the egg be worth?</p> <p>Solution: Any birder would first ask, “What kind of goose?” and the ensuing discussion would probably take hours longer than the actual calculation.</p> <p>What is the volume of the egg and the mass of gold replacing the egg? If we say a <u>typical</u> goose egg is about 150 ml (cu cm) and the density of gold is 19.32 grams/cc, 150 cc x 19.32 g/cc = 2898 g of gold</p> <p>Price of gold? US\$61.27/g on 16 Oct 2020</p> <p>2898 g x \$61.27/g = US\$177,560.46 per egg.</p>	<p>Canada Geese are widely studied, and with so many subspecies, there is great size diversity. Some facts about Canada Goose eggs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elliptical to ovoid in shape, white - Average egg size is 3.3 in. (8.3 cm) long and 2.2 in. (5.6cm) wide - Average clutch size is 5 eggs and the last egg laid is usually the smallest - Younger or physically smaller females generally lay smaller eggs - CANG subspecies vary considerably. Typical egg masses, for instance: <i>Branta canadensis interior</i> – 159gm <i>Branta canadensis maxima</i> – 168 gm
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Trivia references:

S. Nedomova & Jaroslav Buchar, 2014, “Goose eggshell geometry,” in: *Res. Agr. Eng.*, Vol. 60 (3) pp. 100-106. <https://www.agriculturejournals.cz/publicFiles/131329.pdf>

V.G. Narushin, 2005, “Egg Geometry Calculation Using the Measurements of Length and Breadth,” in: *Poultry Science* Vol. 84, pp.482-484.

Gold spot price US\$61.27/gm, retrieved 16 Oct 2020. <https://www.jmbullion.com/charts/gold-price/>
