

The Spoonbill

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

December 2020

Greetings! Although Bayland Community Center has reopened, in an abundance of caution, we will once again use the Zoom online platform for our December 7 meeting.

The program: “**Birds and more in Southeast Asia,**” was presented by Kendra Kocab on Dec 7.

She shared details about her pre-COVID trip to Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and brief stop in Japan. While there was a lot of talk about birds, Kendra also included details about other aspects of her trip (food, culture, architecture, scenery, and more!)

At right: a pair of Kalij Pheasants, *Lophura leucomelanos*, Phetchaburi, Thailand, January 2020 photo by K. Kocab.



Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://utexas.zoom.us/j/98122069692>

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

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

December Trivia Q: What birds are named for trees? (Answer is at the very end)

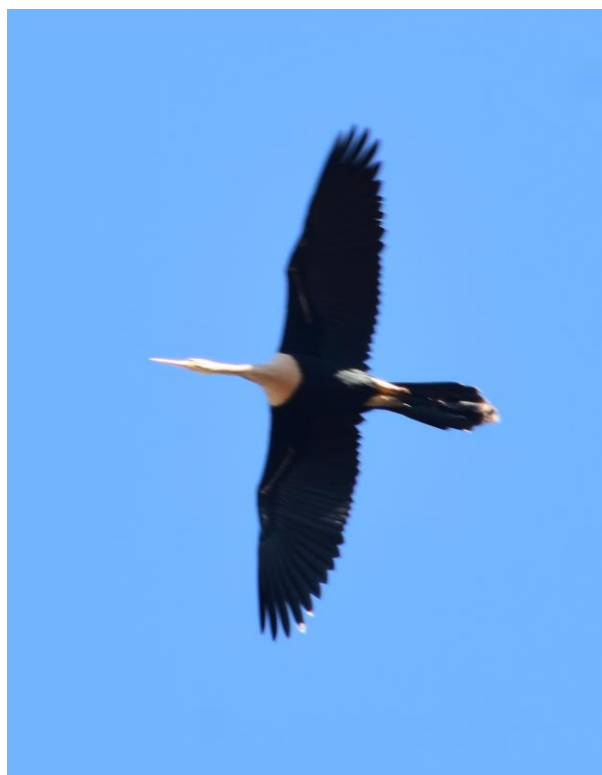
OG Field Trip report, Tuesday, 1 Dec 2020 to Keith-Wiess Park,

12300 Aldine Westfield Rd, Harris County – Nina Rach, Tira Overstreet, Margaret & Frank Farese

It was a crisp, sunny morning with a clear blue sky when we gathered for our fourth OG field trip of the fall. There was a light wind and it was ~42 deg when we started, warming quickly to 52 deg by 10am, and 62 deg at 12:30. There was standing water in fields and gullies following 4+ days of rain.

Fortunately, the paths are well-graded and many are paved, so the park can be navigated easily, even in wet weather.

We walked nearly 5 miles, from the main parking area on Aldine Westfield Road, to the southern ponds and southern bridge entrance at Mierianne St., where we encountered one of the Belted Kingfishers and heard odd calls (turned out to be a pair of caged cockatiels) and encountered a noisy mixed flock on the Halls Bayou Greenway trail. While walking the Mount Houston Road trail just before noon, two dozen Snow Geese flew overhead, a welcome winter sight. (Photos: habitat and a female Anhinga, by N. Rach)



Species encountered at Keith-Wiess Park (46):

Snow Goose, Pied-billed Grebe, American Coot, Killdeer, Anhinga, Neotropic & Double-crested Cormorants, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Little Blue Heron, White Ibis, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle pair, Red-shouldered Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker,

Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue-headed Vireo, White-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, House Wren, Carolina Wren, Brown Thrasher, Northern Mockingbird, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, House Sparrows, American Pipit, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, White-throated Sparrow, Orange-crowned Warbler, Pine Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Northern Cardinal, and Indigo Bunting.

<https://ebird.org/hotspot/L463084> , <https://www.houstontx.gov/parks/parksites/keithwiesspark.html>

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Time to Renew Membership for 2021 - NOW

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



Announcement of new Field Trip Coordinator for 2021! Welcome Lisa Li!

Lisa Li has graciously agreed to take on responsibility for planning OG field trips.

Want to help organize a trip? You can contact Lisa at: scissortailed20@yahoo.com

Upcoming field trips... will be led by John Berner (Waller County), Allen Hardee (Marathon Land Farm, Galveston County), Ron Weeks (Brazoria County), and others. Have suggestions?

OG field trips will always be listed on our FaceBook page, as well as within The Spoonbill.

Taxonomy Debate: Should honorific bird names stand, or be renamed?

One of our Texas birds is being considered for renaming: **McCown's Longspur**, *Rhynchophanes mccownii*, found in the Panhandle, west, and sometimes in central Texas. This grassland species was named for John P. McCown, an amateur ornithologist who shot a few of the birds in 1851, recognized them as something new, and sent them to a friend for documentation. McCown later became a Major General in the Confederate Army. A new name, **Thick-billed Longspur**, has recently been proposed.

See Asher Elbein's summary and discussion of the issues here:

<https://www.audubon.org/news/-bird-world-grappling-its-own-confederate-relic-mccowns-longspur>

This is the season: McCown's Longspurs are found across the western US, including the western half of Texas. They are rarely found in our area, but this has been a big year for many western species moving eastward across the country.

Historical local sightings include birds seen near Highlands Reservoir in Harris County (Dec 2011- Jan 2012), on Katy Prairie in Waller County (Jan 1986), on Bolivar Flats in Galveston County (Jan 2015), on Quintana Beach in Brazoria County (Oct 2006), west of Navasota in Brazos County (Dec 2020), around Lake Somerville in Burleson County (Jan 2001), and many other locations to the north and west.

Local birding events – please wear a mask

Baytown Nature Center Monthly Bird Count, Harris County –

Third Thursdays: None in December, due to CBCs. Next will be Jan 21.

Meet David Hanson & Chuck Davis at 8:00am in the parking lot behind the entrance building.

Seabourne Creek Nature Park, Rosenberg, Fort Bend County - Weekly Wednesday Bird Walks

- 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 (Dec 5, Jan 2) and Senior (50+) Fri. bus trips.

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 (usually third Saturday): Dec 5

121st Christmas Bird Count – Dec 14, 2020 to Jan 5, 2021

Information and plans were delayed due to COVID considerations, and most dates and times were announced after Nov 15. <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>

Dec 14 (Mon) - Central Houston CBC - contact Anna Vallery, avallery@houstonaudubon.org

Dec 14 (Mon) - Matagorda County CBC - contact Brent Ortego, brentortego@hotmail.com

Dec 14 (Mon) - Johnson Bayou, SW Louisiana CBC - contact Gary Kelley, garymke@sbcglobal.net

Dec 15 (Tues) - Galveston CBC - contact Lalise and Greg Mason, lalise@earthlink.net

Dec 17 (Thurs) - Bolivar Peninsula CBC, Chambers County. Contact Steve Mayes, sgmayes@hotmail.com

Dec 18 (Fri) - San Bernard NWR CBC - contact Ron Weeks, ronweeks@sbcglobal.net or Jennifer Wilson, jennifer_wilson@fws.gov

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

Dec 19 (Sat) - Brazos Bend CBC - contact Justin Bower, justinbower@gmail.com

Dec 19 (Sat) - Armand Bayou CBC - Andrew Hamlett or Martha Hood at armandbayoucbc@gmail.com

Dec 20 (Sun) - Freeport CBC - contact Mike Austin, mj_eh@comcast.net

Dec 22 (Tues) - Sea Rim CBC - contact John Whittle, johnawhittle@aol.com

Dec 27 (Sun) - Buffalo Bayou (West Houston) - contact Adam Wood, birdsondabrain@gmail.com

Dec 27 (Sun) - Old River CBC, Chambers & Liberty counties - Paul Fagala, covebirder@yahoo.com

Dec 29 (Tues) - Beech Creek CBC, Tyler & Jasper counties. Sheila Hebert, sheilakhebert@hotmail.com

2021 CBC dates

Jan 1 (Fri) - Cypress Creek CBC (Katy Prairie) - contact Kendra Kocab, klebwoods@hctx.net

Jan 1 (Fri) - Orange County CBC - Contact Gary Kelley, garymke@sbcglobal.net

Jan 2 (Sat) - Houston-Baytown CBC - contact David Sarkozi, david@sarkozi.net

Jan 2 (Sat) - Brazoria-Columbia Bottomlands CBC, contact Martin Hagne, mhagne@gcbo.org

Jan 2 (Sat) - San Jacinto Wilderness CBC - contact David Henderson, embrenhar1@gmail.com

Jan 4 (Mon) – Galveston West End CBC

Webinars – to help with Christmas Bird Counts

Arizona Field Ornithologists (AZFO) CBC Workshop, led by Jennie MacFarland & Troy Corman, was held Dec 5, 2020, posted to YouTube (1:41). “You will learn how to find more species as a team and how to navigate tricky species identifications”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oxihv9gIXUE&feature=youtu.be>



National Audubon’s interactive map of count circles (works fine with iPhone and iPads):

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=ac275eeb01434cedb1c5dcd0fd3fc7b4>

For Android devices, use ArcGIS Explorer and enter “121st CBC”

Three Great Volunteer Opportunities

The Ornithology Group needs someone to serve as 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!

Harlan Evans has volunteered for many years but would finally like to step down as OG’s Treasurer and is looking for someone else to take on the responsibility.

Please contact Nina if you are interested in any of these positions.



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 Nov 22, 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>

Virtual Birding Seminar – Tues, Dec 15, 2020, “An evening of bird research”

6:00-8:00pm, recommended donation \$25, all proceeds will benefit Rio Diablo Youth Birding Camp. Hosted by Texas Ornithological Society & Birding by Texas AgriLife Extension Service

Three speakers:

Madeleine Thornley (Texas A&M), “Impacts of nesting disturbance on White-tailed Hawks in S. Texas”

Marky Mutchler (LSU), “Bell’s Vireos along the middle Rio Grande”

Liam Wolf (Stephen F. Austin State Univ.), “Detecting Bachman’s Sparrows in East Texas”



Register:

<https://valverdeextension.ticketleap.com/tosbirdingseminar/>

Cup Chat: Birding with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Wednesdays 7:30am with Emily Grant and Maureen Frank. Archived at <https://m.facebook.com/agrilife.birding/>

Dec 9 – Guest Carlos Bethancourt, Panama

Nov 11 – Guest Orin Robinson, eBird Data Information Scientist & Brian Calk, Albuquerque

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Birding Webinars from Tucson Audubon: Register: <https://tucsonaudubon.org/news-events/>

Dec 17 (Thurs) - Great Design Ideas for a Bird-Friendly Yard, 11:00-12:30pm CST
(Tucson Audubon/ Green Valley Gardeners)

Two common misconceptions exist about bird-friendly landscaping. Some believe that landscaping for wildlife means an ugly, “weedy” landscape, too unkempt for a residential setting. Others believe that their small yard will make no difference, so why bother. These attitudes could never be further from the truth! Designing for wildlife is not only beautiful, it gives homeowners a chance to break out of the cookie cutter mold of the typical residential landscape and create a lush oasis of varied and colorful plants that can be enjoyed by people and birds. Plus, with the loss of nearly 3 billion birds over the last 50 years, even the smallest yard can include some native plants that make a difference for our winged friends. Birds can be sources of fun, free pest control, musical entertainment and aerial gymnastics. Attracting birds means more than just hanging a feeder or adding a birdbath, though. A bird-friendly yard needs to meet all of a bird’s basic needs for food, shelter, water and nesting. So, if you want a space where birds do more than just pass through, these design tips will help you create a space where they want to stay a while.

Dec 22 (Tues) - Eared Quetzals: Status and Breeding Ecology in Chihuahua, Mexico, 12noon-1:30pm CST
(Tucson Audubon/ Sonoran Joint Venture)

This year has been a historic year for Eared Quetzals venturing into Arizona (and New Mexico!), and numerous birders probably got their lifers either in Rucker Canyon or Cave Creek Canyon in the Chiricahua Mountains within the last several months. We invite you to join Javier Cruz-Nieto and Micah Riegner for a Zoom presentation journey to the Sierra Madre Occidental of Chihuahua, Mexico, where they will discuss the behavior, breeding ecology, and status of this magnificent bird. Javier will draw on his 26+ years of living in Chihuahua studying both Thick-billed Parrots and Eared Quetzals, and Micah will draw on a recent trip he took to film the birds nesting in colossal Aspens.

Jan 5 (Tues) - Birds of Sabino Canyon Recreation Area, 11:00am-12noon CST

With photos and commentary, Jean and Mark Hengesbaugh, who are both Sabino Canyon Volunteer Naturalists, will examine resident birds, summer nesting birds, and birds of the fall/winter months at one of the most popular destinations in Tucson. We’ll also touch on some of the unusual birds observed in recent years, including a partially albino Phainopepla that has appeared seven years in a row!

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Upcoming 2021 Ornithology Group meetings (Monday evenings, on Zoom for now)

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

April 5 & May 3– TBA

Ornithology Group - www.OrnithologyGroup.org

Chair	Nina Rach	Nina.Rach@yahoo.com
Vice-chair (Programs)	- OPEN – interesting job!	Your email here!
Field Trips	Lisa Li	scissortailed20@yahoo.com
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Membership	Michael Honel	MichaelHonel@sbcglobal.net
ONC Board Represent.	Tira Overstreet	Oddbird47@comcast.net
The Spoonbill Editor	- OPEN – temporarily Nina -	Nina.Rach@yahoo.com

November Trivia Q answer, by Billi:

Birds named for trees:

Treepies – ten species of arboreal, long-tailed passerines corvids in the Corvid family, in four genera: *Dendrocitta*, *Crypsirina*, *Temnurus*, and recently *Platysmurus*)

“Wisdom begins with putting the right name on a thing.” (Old Chinese Proverb)

A good guess would have been...

Cassowary, genus **Casuarius**, with three living species: Southern Cassowary (*Casuarius casuarius*), Northern Cassowary (*Casuarius unappendiculatus*), and Dwarf Cassowary (*Casuarius bennetti*).

The common and the scientific names derive from the Malay (Papuan) words *kasu*, *kasuari*, or *kasavari* for horned, and *weri* for head.

Similarly named, but unrelated, *Casuarina* is a genus of 17 tree species, often called Australian Pines, e.g. *Casuarina equisetifolia*- Australian Whistling Pine

Trivia references:

IOC World Bird List: <https://www.worldbirdnames.org/bow/crows/>
