

# The Spoonbill

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

March 2021

Greetings! Although we maintain our 2021 reservations at Bayland Community Center, in an abundance of caution, we will continue to use the Zoom online platform for our monthly meetings.

1 March 2021 OG meeting

The program: “**Birding in Northeast Brazil,**” was presented by Lisa Li.

Her summary of their 2019 trip follows on the next pages of the newsletter, and Li’s amazing photos can be viewed in four sets:

[Part 1, Sept 26-Oct 5](#)

[Part 2, Oct 5-9](#)

[Part 3, Oct 10-13](#)

[Part 4, Oct 13-26](#)

Photo at right by Li Li: **Araripe Manakin, or “Soldadinho do Araripe”** (*Antilophia bokermanni*), is an endangered passerine, first described in 1998. The species epithet commemorates Brazilian zoologist and wildlife filmmaker Werner Bokermann (d. 1995).

More info:

<https://www.birdlife.org/americas/projects/preventing-extinctions-araripe-manakin>



Zoom links are sent to registered OG/ONC members.

Each month, the Zoom lobby opens at 6:45pm for check-in, and the meetings begin at 7:00pm.

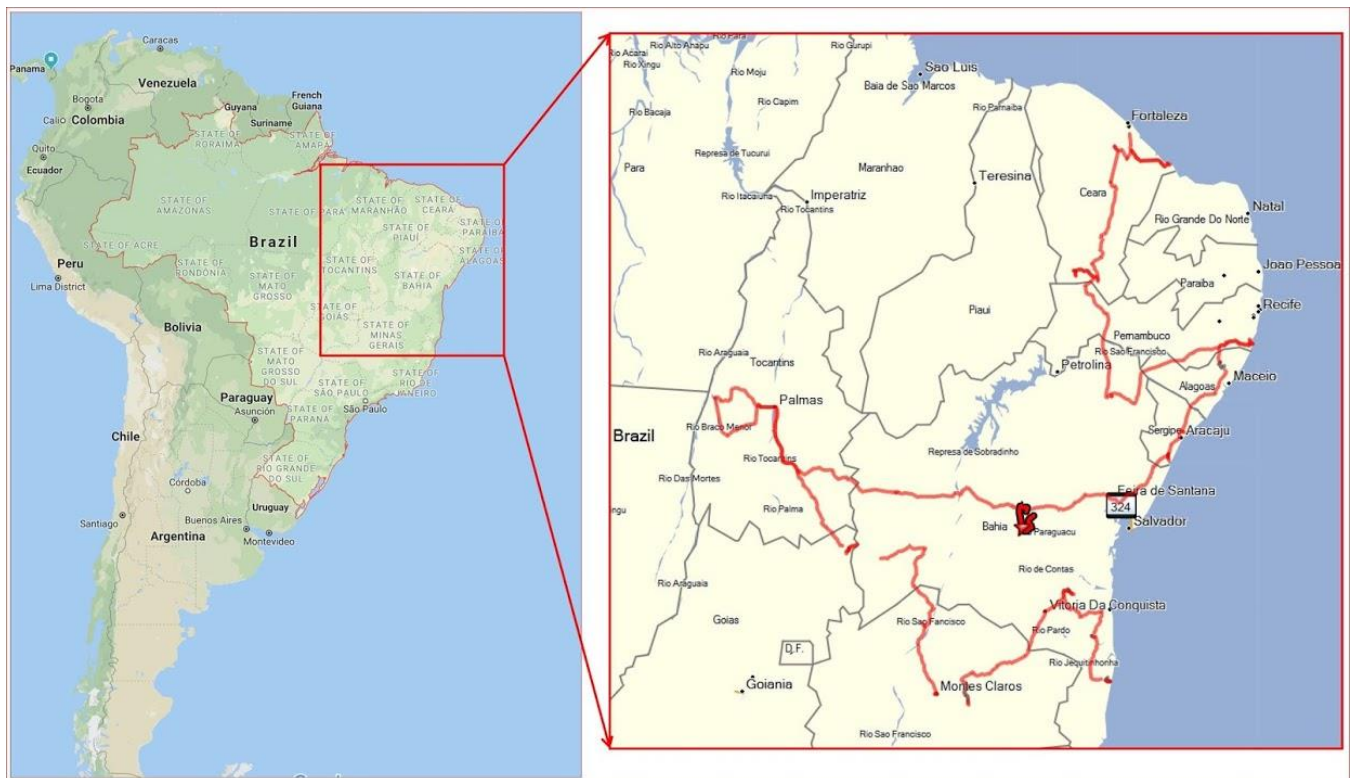
**March Trivia Q: What bird species was recently rediscovered (in 2020) after having last been seen in the 1840s?** (Answer is at the very end of the newsletter)

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## Birding Northeast Brazil, by Lisa Li

Brazil is always a great place for birdwatching. It has about 1,700 species within its boundary, in diverse habitats. Atlantic Forest and Pantanal are the two most popular regions. A few years ago, while traveling in Peru, fellow birder David Fisher from UK had a stunning bird as the wall paper of his laptop. It's an **Araripe Manakin**. That picture seared a lasting image in my head. I knew then that we NEEDED to go see it. This species is critically endangered; it only exists in a tiny area of NE Brazil. But amazingly, it's not that hard to see in its range.

After some research, I reached out to **Ciro Albano**, guide and co-owner of **Brazil Birding Experts**, to arrange a private trip. After getting burned by the guiding service in West Papua, I took precautions and got feedback from fellow birders before we committed to the trip. **Ciro** offers a range of tours covering the region. We eventually decided on a 4-week trip to cover different habitats from the Atlantic forest to the savanna of Cerrado, flat top plateau of Chapada, to the eastern edge of Amazon basin. Below is our actual GPS tracking, covered a distance nearly 10,000 KMs (~6,000 miles).



## Travel

United offers very convenient, non-stop overnight flights between Houston and Rio de Janeiro or Sao Paulo, but they are ridiculously expensive. Instead, we chose to fly through Florida to catch flights on a Brazilian airline, Azul. Because **Ciro** was ending a previous tour at Porto Seguro, we agreed to start ours at Porto Seguro and to end at Fortaleza.

Compared to other places we had been, traveling in Brazil was much easier! Food was generally good. Roads were in reasonable condition. We stayed mostly in small lodges and *Pousadas*, a B&B-style home stay, in small towns and villages. All lodges had electricity and Wi-Fi, except three days at the Cangucu Research Center of Tocantins.

## Birding

As part of preparation for the trip, I added all locations into my iPhone App **BirdsEye** as favorites. **BirdsEye** was connected to eBird database, and it pulled up all seen/heard birds of each location and produced a lifer list for us. The list was updated every time I submitted a new checklist. It gave Ciro and me great pleasure to see the list shrinking every day.

Ciro had done the route so many times that the trip was well-planned, beyond our expectation. We spent mornings birding, most mid-days driving to our next location for some late afternoon birding. Ciro had birds in mind every time he stopped at a location, and we plugged the birds off my list one by one. Unlike our previous birding experience in the Neotropics, that flocks of birds either overwhelmed and frustrated us, or it was so quiet that I had to find something else to focus on. While we had flocks here and there, birds seemed to be more spaced out. We were neither overwhelmed nor bored, it's simply efficient and enjoyable birding, minus drama or stress. Four weeks is a long time in the field. Normally after a couple of weeks, Li and I would be tired or sick of the travel, and ready for home. With this trip, both of us felt we could go on for another week if possible. In the end, we saw **total of 621 species** of birds. When we arrived in Fortaleza, we sort of ran out of birds to see.

## Afterthoughts

- Ciro and Olivia (office manager) did an excellent job making arrangement on logistics. The whole area is like Ciro's backyard. Because of that, travel was almost uneventful. Of course, Ciro did all the driving. Some were really long (500-600 km in a day).
- Ciro is an excellent guide, knows the birds extremely well. All the local guides, Andre in Tocantins, Jefferson, Bob and Warley are all great guys, and know their local birds.
- Tocantins is a must visit place. I chose the place because of Kaempfer's Woodpecker, but the place has so many endemic birds that you can't get anywhere else. And we got a Harpy Eagle!
- All locations have their purposes. But I was disappointed by segments of Murici and Tamadare. Birds were harder (some impossible for us) to get, and the roads weren't in best condition. I could have spent those two days in Tocantins or somewhere else.
- If I have to redo this trip, I would prefer to start from Fortaleza. Fortaleza is a big city and there aren't that many birding places nearby. Our trip was so successful that we ran out of birds to get when we arrived in Fortaleza. We ended up spending the last morning in hotel for relaxation.
- One thing that concerned us before we went was the personal safety in Brazil. We heard/read all about the mugging and robberies. According to Ciro, that's a "big city problem." Once we got out of the city, it's as safe as you can expect. Never once we had any trouble with anyone.

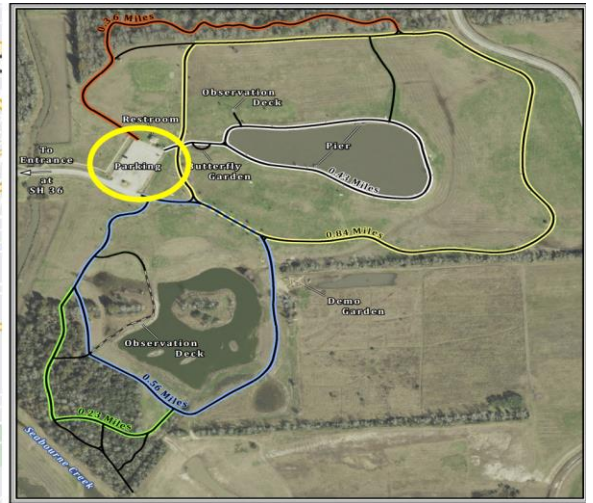
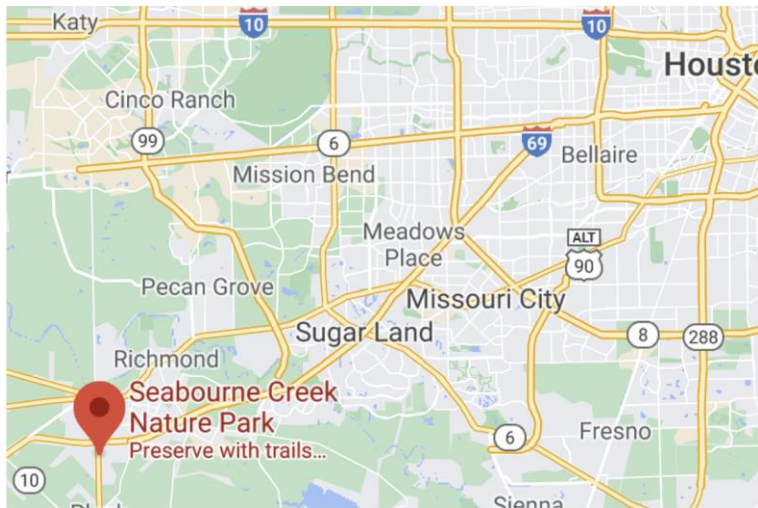
[A big THANK YOU to Lisa and Li for sharing this terrific trip with us! Well done! – Nina]

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## This Month's Field Trip – Saturday, 13 March 2021

OG is hosting its Monthly Field Trip at Seabourne Creek Nature Park on March 13, 2021. Seabourne Creek Nature Park is a 164-acre park located in Rosenberg with a lake, wetlands, prairie restoration area, and butterfly garden. It's an [eBird hotspot with 219 species](#).

The trip will be led by Mark Scheuerman. Advance sign up is required; please email Lisa Li at [scissortailed20@yahoo.com](mailto:scissortailed20@yahoo.com) for further information.



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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



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

April 5 – Charles Alexander, Parrot colonies in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas

May 3 – TBD

June & July – summer break

August 2 – Prof. Tim Brush, UTRGV, topic TBD

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## Upcoming Webinars, March 2021

11 March (Thurs) – **Brand New to Birding- How to Utilize Your Field Guide**, with Luke Safford.  
Hosted by Tucson Audubon, 12:00 noon CST on Zoom

Being a “brand new” birder can be a little intimidating, but it shouldn’t be that way at all! Join Luke Safford for the “Brand New to Birding” series which will encourage you as a beginning birder and continue to ignite your passion for birds. During this session we’ll take a look at the plethora of Bird ID guides out there, which ones might be best for you, and how best to utilize all the information you will find inside. <https://tucsonaudubon.org/news-events/>

11 March (Thurs) – **Window Pains: Helping Birds Survive a Human World**, with Heidi Trudell.  
Hosted by Houston Audubon, 7:00 pm CST on Zoom and live-streamed on FaceBook

With native bird populations experiencing steep declines, it's critical to take immediate action to reduce the human threats to their survival. In addition to habitat loss and outdoor cats, glass is the leading cause of death among songbirds: these, and other factors will be explored during the session.

12 March (Fri) – **Virtual Birding in Costa Rica**, with a local guide from Mowgli Expeditions.  
Hosted by Travis Audubon, 8:00am-9:00am CST; \$15 fee (\$12 goes to the guide); Register by 4pm 3/11

Experience real-time virtual birding with a guide in a distant remote forest in Costa Rica. In an instant, we will be transported to the rainforest, exploring and looking for birds. This birding session will be from the Caribbean Lowlands.

[https://travisaudubon.org/?event=virtual-birding-in-costa-rica-9&event\\_date=2021-03-12](https://travisaudubon.org/?event=virtual-birding-in-costa-rica-9&event_date=2021-03-12)

12 March (Fri) – Opening Keynote for the Virtual Migratory Bird Festival: **Birding is for Everyone**, with Tykee James, government affairs coordinator at the National Audubon Society and the audio producer for [www.WildlifeObserverNetwork.com](http://www.WildlifeObserverNetwork.com) Tykee hosts two podcasts: *Brothers in Birding* and *On Word for Wildlife*.

Hosted by Mitchell Lake Audubon Center,  
**6:00-7:30pm CST**; Zoom  
<https://mitchelllake.audubon.org/MBF-programs>



16 March (Tues) – **Sapsucker Identification**, with Mark Scheel (Research Professor of Theoretical Astrophysics at Caltech; specializes in the physics of black holes & gravitational waves). **9:00pm CST**

At first glance, sapsuckers seem straightforward to identify. There are only four species, and one species looks very different from the others. But in real life, many sapsuckers don't look as distinctive as the illustrations found in field guides. This not only because of individual variation, but also because of hybridization. Intermediate individuals occur frequently enough that the taxonomy has been disputed and revised several times, and three of the four currently-recognized species were considered conspecific by the AOU until 1983.

Join us for a look at Sapsucker identification as we try to sort out the various species, not only by plumage characteristics but by age, sex, status and distribution. [www.losangelesbirders.org](http://www.losangelesbirders.org)

17 March - **Winter Ecology of the Golden-cheeked Warbler**, with Eric Molina.  
Hosted by Travis Audubon, 12:00pm-1:00pm CST on Zoom; \$10 donation encouraged

This talk will be about the Winter Ecology of the Golden-cheeked Warbler, as it joins other insectivorous species of Warblers, Vireos, Flycatchers, Woodcreepers, Tanagers, Woodpeckers, among others, all of them forming assemblages of birds composed of Residents and Neotropical migratory birds. Eric will talk about the opportunities and challenges for their study and conservation in the temperate forests of the highlands of Northern Central America (Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Southern Mexico).

Since 2010, Eric Hernández Molina has collaborated with national and international institutions in the development and implementation of comprehensive conservation programs for wild bird species in the Mexican southeast. He currently works in **Pronatura Sur**, a Mexican NGO in southern Mexico, and collaborates in the coordination of the Research Committee of the Golden-cheeked Warbler in the Alliance for the Conservation of Pine-Oak Forests of Mesoamerica.

[https://travisaudubon.org/?event=virtual-talk-with-eric-molina-winter-ecology-of-the-golden-cheeked-warbler&event\\_date=2021-03-17](https://travisaudubon.org/?event=virtual-talk-with-eric-molina-winter-ecology-of-the-golden-cheeked-warbler&event_date=2021-03-17)

19 March - **Golden-cheeked Warbler Research at Baker Sanctuary**, with Chris Murray.  
Hosted by Travis Audubon, 12:00pm-1:00pm CST on Zoom; \$10 donation encouraged

This virtual talk will discuss the Golden-cheeked Warbler research and conservation efforts at Travis Audubon's Baker Sanctuary. This talk will be given by Chris Murray, Travis Audubon's Land Manager, who leads the Golden-cheeked research efforts at Baker. *This event is part of Travis Audubon's Golden-cheek Week that celebrates our favorite endangered songbird.*

[https://travisaudubon.org/?event=virtual-talk-with-chris-murray-golden-cheeked-warbler-research-at-baker-sanctuary&event\\_date=2021-03-19](https://travisaudubon.org/?event=virtual-talk-with-chris-murray-golden-cheeked-warbler-research-at-baker-sanctuary&event_date=2021-03-19)

20 March – **Spoon-billed Sandpipers and the East Asian-Australasian Flyway**, inaugural webinar of the Oriental Bird Club, 10:00-11:30am GMT (London), which is 4:00am-5:30am CST

Why get up that early? To meet the OBC's team of shorebird experts, hear the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Story, learn about the Pak Thale Nature Reserve in Thailand, and satellite tagging program of SBSAs.

Register (free): [https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_IS6brQ9LRkurkFE17pahgg](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_IS6brQ9LRkurkFE17pahgg)

# Oriental Bird Club

Webinar | 20 March 2021



Title: Spoon-billed Sandpipers  
& the East Asian-Australasian Flyway

Time: 10.00-11.30 GMT

Registration: <https://tinyurl.com/ykdcy2sc>



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## 23 March - **Bird Flight Patterns and Music Concert Program**

Hosted by Travis Audubon, 12:00pm-1:00pm CST on Zoom; \$10 donation

Support Travis Audubon while getting excited for the upcoming birding season by registering for the New Bedford Symphony Orchestra's [Bird Flight Patterns and Music Concert Program](https://travisaudubon.org/?event=bird-flight-patterns-and-music-concert-program&event_date=2021-03-23). This innovative program combines music and science to investigate different types of avian flight patterns.

[https://travisaudubon.org/?event=bird-flight-patterns-and-music-concert-program&event\\_date=2021-03-23](https://travisaudubon.org/?event=bird-flight-patterns-and-music-concert-program&event_date=2021-03-23)

## 23 March - **Lunch & Learn: Birding Technology Basics**, with Delaney Kempf

Hosted by Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, Virtual Migratory Bird Festival, **12:00-1:00pm CST**; Zoom

<https://mitchelllake.audubon.org/MBF-programs>

## 24 March - **Balcony Birding in the Time of Coronavirus**, with Martin Reid

Hosted by Bexar Audubon Society & Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, Virtual Migratory Bird Festival, **6:30-8:00pm CST**; Zoom Meeting ID: 814 8505 4370; Passcode: 440969

<https://bexaraudubon.org/meetings-events/>

The COVID-19 pandemic changed our lives in myriad ways, but it had a silver lining in that many people spent far more time looking for birds in their home environment. Discover how the pandemic revealed the rich birdlife outside an apartment in the hospital district of northwestern San Antonio.

27 March – Closing Keynote: **Saving the Cerulean Warbler**, with Katie Fallon, author of *Cerulean Blues: A Personal Search for a Vanishing Songbird* (2011) and *Vulture: The Private Life of an Unloved Bird* (2020, 2017), and columnist for *Bird Watcher's Digest*.

Hosted by Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, Virtual Migratory Bird Festival, **6:00-7:30pm CST**; Zoom; \$5.00 ticket at <https://mitchelllake.audubon.org/MBF-programs>

29 March - **Workshop: Making Your Birdathon the Best**, with Luke Safford  
Hosted by Tucson Audubon, 12:00 noon CST on Zoom

Our annual Birdathon is a great opportunity to enjoy birds while raising or donating critical funds for Tucson Audubon; it's like a walkathon, but instead of counting miles we count birds! Join Luke Safford as he'll share his Birdathon tips and stories, help you develop some creative ideas, and answer any questions you might have as you get started on your Birdathon adventure.

<https://tucsonaudubon.org/news-events/>

## Upcoming Webinars, April 2021

5 April - **Following the scent of avian olfaction**, with Prof. Gabrielle Nevitt, Dept of Neurobiology, Physiology, and Behavior at UC Davis. Hosted by Nuttall Ornithological Club, Zoom

When John James Audubon proclaimed that birds lacked a sense of smell, the study of avian olfaction was doomed to suffer ridicule by ornithology text books for years to come. In recent years, ornithologists have renewed their interest into the sense of smell in birds leading to a new appreciation of their chemical ecology. The tubenosed seabirds (petrels and albatrosses) of the order Procellariiformes have among the most impressive olfactory abilities of any animal on earth. Species within this order spend most of their lives flying over the world's oceans, returning to land each year or every other year, to breed and rear a single offspring. They tend to partner for life and show strong nest-site fidelity between breeding seasons. Much of my research career has focused on elucidating how procellariiform species use olfaction to perform behaviors ranging from foraging and navigation to mate choice and individual recognition. My presentation will touch on some of our recent findings and hopefully convince you that olfaction is a rich field of study, and that questions related to sensory ecology are both important and applicable to scientific inquiry into the biology and conservation.

<https://www.nuttallclub.org/programs/>

13 April – **Nocturnal Flight Call Recording in LA County**, with Andy Birch, **9:00pm CST**

You may have heard that a vast multitude of birds migrate at night. While it is now fairly popular to watch birds migrating at daytime, you may have wondered, how on earth can we experience bird migration at night? Andy will try to help you unlock the secrets of how to witness and record this hidden bird migration happening across our skies at night. [www.losangelescountybirders.org](http://www.losangelescountybirders.org)

14 April - **Ravens, Wolves and People**, with John Marzluff (James W. Ridgeway Professor of Wildlife Science at the University of Washington).

Hosted by New Hampshire Audubon Seacoast Chapter, 6:30pm CST on Zoom

Common Ravens are known to scavenge from wolves and people, but the degree to which they exploit these and other sources of food has not been studied in detail. In 2019, Matthias Loretto and presenter John Marzluff began tagging ravens in Yellowstone National Park with long-lasting GSM transmitters. After tagging more than 60 ravens and relating their movements to those of people and wolves, they are gaining an appreciation of the raven's reliance on both providers.

<https://www.nhaudubon.org/event/ravens-wolves-and-people/>



**Upcoming local birding events** – please wear a mask

**Baytown Nature Center Monthly Bird Count, Harris County –**

Third Thursdays: **Next will be March 18.**

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 –** Wednesday morning bird walks, 8:30am-11:30am. Kleb Woods staff also run First Saturday bird walks, 8-10am (**March 6, April 3**) and Senior (50+) Fri. bus trips (March 26).

**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):** **March 27**



**Texas State Parks Status**

Almost all Texas State Parks are open, although access and hours may be limited, and camping is still closed at some. The following are closed: Balmorhea SP (Toyahvale), and Wyler Aerial Tramway (El Paso). But Indian Lodge (Fort Davis) has reopened – book online!

See <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/parks-map>

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**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>Lisa Li</b>	scissortailed20@yahoo.com
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Jean Greenhalgh</b>	Jeanbrit01@yahoo.com
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Harlan Evans – leaving soon</b>	HarlanJ42@sbcglobal.net
<b>Membership</b>	<b>Michael Honel</b>	MichaelHonel@sbcglobal.net
<b>ONC Board Represent.</b>	<b>Tira Overstreet</b>	Oddbird47@comcast.net
<b>The Spoonbill Editor</b>	- <b>OPEN</b> – temporarily Nina -	Nina.Rach@yahoo.com

## Three Great Volunteer Opportunities at OG

1. The Ornithology Group needs someone to serve as Newsletter Editor for The Spoonbill.
2. The OG Vice-Chair (**your name here**) is in charge of arranging our monthly speakers – consider volunteering and trying this out for a year!
3. 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.

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### March Trivia Q answer:

The **Black-Browed Babbler** (*Malacocincla perspicillata*) is a songbird species in the family Pellorneidae, endemic to Indonesian Borneo. It was collected and named by German naturalist Carl Swananer, between 1843 and 1848, and this holotype—a species-defining reference specimen—is now in the collection of the Naturalis Biodiversity Center in the Netherlands.

It was the only individual ever seen, until Muhammad Suranto and Muhammad Rizky Fauzan captured a living Black-Browed Babbler in South Kalimantan rainforest in southeastern Borneo in October 2020. They took photos of it for identification, released it safely, and sent the photos to a local birdwatching group, BW Galeatus, which was formed in 2016 to help teach local communities about the region's avian diversity. Ornithologists agreed, and it was published in *BirdingASIA* 34 (2020): 13-14, the biannual bulletin on Asian birds and birding, published by the Oriental Bird Club

It is exciting that this discovery was made, confirmed, and published during the COVID pandemic. Ornithology perseveres.

Trivia references:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c1a9e03f407b482a158da87/t/6034c09a3440914018d3c306/1614071211606/Black-browed-Babbler.pdf>

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/long-lost-babbler-rediscovered-borneo-after-over-170-years-180977141/>

### Photo by Mohammad Suranto



Malaysian Borneo shown in pale yellow