



The Spoonbill

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

September 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.

13 September 2021 OG meeting

The program: “**Balcony Birding in the Time of Coronavirus,**” was presented by San Antonio’s Martin Reid.

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.

You can reach Martin at upupa@airmail.net



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

Zoom links are sent to registered OG/ ONC members.

September Trivia Q: Fifty years ago, in 1971, Douglas Lawson, from the Jackson School of Geosciences at the University of Texas, discovered fossils in Big Bend that were new species of flying reptiles related to birds. What were these, and what/who was the largest one named after?

(Answer is at the very end of the newsletter)

Pelagic Trip Report, 14 August 2021 – by Statira Overstreet

After missing an entire year of pelagic trips, we were excited to go out of South Padre Island on the first of Gary Hodne's 2021 Texas Pelagic trips, on August 14. The trip was on a new (to the pelagic trips) boat, the Isabella, a catamaran operated by Breakaway Cruises.

The boat is entirely open with bench seating on the open top deck and covered padded seating on the lower deck. The crew was enthusiastic and did everything they could to make the trip comfortable and fun.

The day began with a 5:30 start and we headed east into a lovely cloud bank that spared us the glare and provided a beautiful show. As we passed shrimp boats we saw mostly Royal Terns and Black Terns but also some Sandwich Terns and a few Magnificent Frigate birds.

At one boat we also saw the first of a total of five Brown Boobies, *Sula leucogaster*, a couple of which circled the boat for a good view by all.

Later, coming in, we had one adult Masked Booby, *Sula dactylatra*, fly by the boat but it did not stop.

The trip was a total of 12 hours so that we could spend a satisfactory amount of time off the continental shelf. Since the catamaran makes better time than our usual single-hulled boats and the weather was pretty calm with seas of 2-3 feet offshore, we had extra time in deep water.

The most prevalent of the pelagic birds were definitely the Band-rumped Storm-Petrels, *Oceanodroma castro*.

Next most common were the Audubon's Shearwaters, *Puffinus Iherminieri*.

We also had two Leach's Storm-Petrels, *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*, for which pictures confirmed the ID and finally, a single Cory's Shearwater, *Calonectris diomedea*.



(Continued on next page...)

During the day, the Captain steered us around multiple popup rain storms. That gave us a cool breeze and the possibility of finding pelagic birds while avoiding the rain. We found many of the petrels and shearwaters that way. However, on the way in we were squeezing between two storms and they closed in on us. It was everyone run down and under cover, but other than being wet, it was not scary as there was no lightning. Then we passed on and finally coasted into the dock in sunshine.



In addition to the pelagic birds, we had a just above average species count, we had some migrants. Mostly they were small flocks of passerines that may or may not be identifiable from a few photos. On the Texas Pelagics Facebook page, one photo is identifiable as a Black and White Warbler.

All in all, the trip was quite satisfying and successful!

The next trip is out of Port Aransas on September 18, and due to overwhelming response, Gary has set up an additional South Padre trip for October 16.

As of now they are fully booked, but if you're interested it is a good idea to get on the waiting list because often you can still get on a trip that way.



For information about these trips, past trip reports and registration information, go to the Texas Pelagic website at www.TexasPelagics.com

Under the heading "Meeting Place" you can see information and pictures of the boats for each trip.

August Pelagic Trip leaders were Brad McKinney, Mary Gustafson, Todd McGrath, John O'Brien, Randy Pinkston and Justin Bosler.

Seabird species: Leach's Storm-Petrel, Band-rumped Storm Petrel, Audubon's Shearwater, Cory's Shearwater, Brown Booby, Masked Booby, and Magnificent Frigatebird.

Upcoming 2021 Ornithology Group meetings (First Monday, 7:00pm)

Oct 4 – **Carolyn Ohl**, History of the Christmas Mountains Oasis, Brewster County, Texas (Zoom)

Nov 1 – **Mark Kulstad**, Birds of the World: Simplifying the problem of 10,000 species (Zoom)

Dec 6 – **Kendra Kocab**, Birding in California (live! at Bayland Community Center!)

Birding Webinars & Events, September 2021

2 Sept – Thurs – Partnership for International Birding (PIB) Video Conference – **Birding Mexico in the States of Jalisco and Colima with Luis Morales-Vallín.**

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvDbtQwx8JY&feature=youtu.be>

Itinerary: <https://www.pibird.com/jaliscoandcolimaitinerary>

14 Sept – Tues – “Fall Migration: Tips to Help Birds on Their Way,” Cornell Lab Bird Academy, <https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/live-event/fall-migration-tips-to-help-birds-on-their-way/>

17 Sept – Fri – “Riveted by Raptors: A Look at Migration,” Cornell Lab Bird Academy, <https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/live-event/riveted-by-raptor-a-look-at-migration/>

20 Sept – Mon – “Birds of the World: Amazing Migrations,” Cornell Lab Bird Academy, <https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/live-event/birds-of-the-world-amazing-migrations/>

22 Sept – Wed – “Migratory Journeys Mapped: The Magic of eBird,” Cornell Lab Bird Academy, <https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/live-event/migratory-journeys-mapped-the-magic-of-ebird/>

24 Sept – Fri - “How the BirdCast Team Created Super-Accurate Bird Forecasts,” Cornell Lab, <https://academy.allaboutbirds.org/live-event/how-the-birdcast-team-created-super-accurate-bird-forecasts/>

25 Sept – Sat – **Smith Point Birding Bus Trip** – Seniors, 50+. Harris Co bus leaves from John Paul Landing (JPL) at 7:30 AM and returns at 5:30pm. Reserve by email: Johnpaulanding@pct3.hctx.net

29 Sept – Wed - **Virtual Swift Night Out**, 5:45pm CST. Livestream on Zoom and Facebook, from Audubon North Carolina, New Hope Audubon, UNC-Wilmington, Seahawk Audubon. <https://nc.audubon.org/events/virtual-swift-night-out>

KLEB WOODS HUMMINGBIRD FEST

Notes from Fred, Kendra, Megan, Sierra, Hunter, & Bayard: The Hummingbird Festival returned in a grand way after the COVID-19 pandemic shut it down in 2020.

The day was blessed with wonderful weather, which helped with attendance. We registered 1128 guests, which is ~80% of our 2019 attendance. That is what we were hoping for and is consistent with attendance at all county activities and services. Of those in attendance, 595 said it was their first time at Kleb Woods. This is also on par with previous years.

Hummingbird banders Sumita Prasad and Jim Renfro had a steady stream of birds to show visitors. This is one of the most popular activities at the festival. Many were able to watch the banding process, and a lucky few got to release a hummingbird!



COMMISSIONER TOM RAMSEY INVITES YOU TO THE 13TH ANNUAL KLEB WOODS HUMMINGBIRD FESTIVAL

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2021
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

HUMMINGBIRD BANDING:
Licensed hummingbird bander Sumita Prasad will be capturing and banding hummingbirds throughout the day. In addition to seeing these feathered jewels up close, you will learn about their unique structure and amazing biology.

NATURE WALKS
Take a guided nature walk.

KIDS ACTIVITIES
Join us to witness hummingbirds in peak migration! Learn everything you want to know about them, including identifying, attracting and gardening for hummingbirds. Enjoy games and activities for the whole family. Tour the 1896 Kleb House, and see blacksmith demonstrations throughout the day.

RAPTORS:
Houston Audubon Society Education Director **Mary Anne Weber** will display several live raptors to be photographed in a natural setting. She will field questions and show her raptors throughout the day.

NATURE TALK:
Kleb Woods staff will present *Hummingbird Biology*. This program is part of our ongoing *A Closer Look at Nature* series, designed to give school-aged children a closer look at our natural world. Enjoy this 20 minute presentation at 12 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.

HISTORY TALK:
Kleb Woods staff will present *The Story of Elmer Kleb & His Woods*. This program is part of our ongoing *A Closer Look at History* series, designed to give school-aged children a closer look at a historical topic. Enjoy this 20 minute presentation at 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m.

Kleb Woods Nature Center, 20303 Draper Rd. at Mueschke Rd, Tomball 77377
*Parking and shuttle service available from New Kentucky Park (21710 F.M. 2920, Hockley, Texas 77447) and the north end Kleb Woods parking lot (20808 FM 2920 Hockley, Texas 77447).

Admission is free. Patrons are encouraged to bring their own refreshments. Drinks and snacks will not be sold. For additional information, call Kleb Woods Nature Center at (281) 357-5324. www.pct3.com/Parks/Kleb-Woods-Nature-Preserve-Center

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory's Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza – 25 Sept 2021

GCBO Headquarters in Lake Jackson was “hit pretty hard by the storm” (Hurricane Nicholas) which passed through Texas’ upper coast on Sept 13-14, and so the staff had to cancel the first day planned for XHX, Sat, Sept 18.

Fortunately, XHX did take place on Sat, Sept 25, with over 720 participants, and about 40 hummingbirds were banded! Kudos to the staff and volunteers for a successful event, sharing the joy and educating folks about these incredible little birds.

Event sponsored by Land Sea and Sky.



GCBO PRESENTS

September 18th & 25th

From 8 a.m. to noon

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory
299 Hwy 332 W
Lake Jackson, TX

XHX
Xtreme
Hummingbird
Xtravaganza

Join us as we celebrate our annual Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza!

TAKING PLACE AT THE PEAK OF HUMMINGBIRD MIGRATION, XHX IS A ONCE A YEAR OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THESE AMAZING BIRDS UP CLOSE.

Watch as we carefully catch and band these tiny travelers and sign up to symbolically adopt one! XHX will also include: door prizes, educational booths, native plant sale, and fun kid's activities!

Admission is only \$5 per person.

Upcoming local birding events – please wear a mask

Baytown Nature Center Monthly Bird Count, Harris County – Third Thursdays: **Sept 16, Oct 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 – Wednesday morning bird walks, 8:30am-11:30am. Kleb Woods staff also run First Saturday bird walks, 8-10am **Sept 4, Oct 2** and monthly Senior (50+) birding bus trips, usually on Fridays.

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

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, Lake Jackson, Brazoria County (third Saturday, 8am-12pm)
Join licensed bird banders and GCBO Research Associates Robert and Kay Lookingbill as they weigh, measure, band, and record details of birds captured in mist nets. **Sept 25, Oct 16**
<https://www.gcbo.org/avian-research-and-monitoring/bird-banding-at-gcbo/>

Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary (LTNS) Open Day, San Jacinto County – fourth Saturday, usually first nature walk begins at 10:00am: **Sept 25, Oct 23**



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.

As of June 26, 2021, the swimming pool and day-use areas at Balmorhea SP (Toyahvale) are open, but there is no camping allowed yet. The Wyler Aerial Tramway (El Paso) remains closed from 2020. Indian Lodge (Fort Davis) is open, but satellite TV is out (just go birding).

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

Ornithology Group - www.OrnithologyGroup.org and www.facebook.com/OrnithologyGroup

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September Trivia Q answer: Quetzalcoatlus sp.

Douglas Lawson was studying the paleoecology of the Late Cretaceous Tornillo Group in Big Bend National Park, when he discovered the first fossil remains of the giant, tailless pterosaur, *Quetzalcoatlus northropi*, in the Javelina Formation. The genus name refers to the Aztec feathered serpent, Quetzalcoatl, and the specific epithet honors John K. (Jack) Northrop because of its similarity to his [flying wing](#) aircraft design (basis of Northrop Grumman’s B-2 Spirit).

Reference:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quetzalcoatlus>



Illustration above right from Mark P. Witton and Darren Naish (2008) “A Reappraisal of Azhdarchid Pterosaur Functional Morphology and Paleocology.” PLoS ONE 3(5): e2271.