

The Spoonbill

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

October 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.

4 October 2021 OG meeting

The program: “**History of the Christmas Mountains Oasis,**” was presented by Carolyn Ohl-Johnson

We are very fortunate to have Carolyn as our speaker this month! She has lived in the Christmas Mountains since 1976, and started the oasis in 1996. She’s also based in Alpine, and now makes the 150-mile roundtrip across Brewster County at least once weekly.

Birders have logged 269 species into eBird, and 2838 checklists, covering every week of the year. CMO is THE spot to reliably see Lucifer Hummingbirds display, on their breeding territory (photo lower right).

You can follow Carolyn’s activities at the Christmas Mountains Oasis at <https://cmoasis.blogspot.com/>

TPWD program on West Texas:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=feVWEbdyvqI>

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.



October Trivia Q:

Eleven U.S. bird species are on their way to being declared extinct by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. What are they and where were they formerly found?

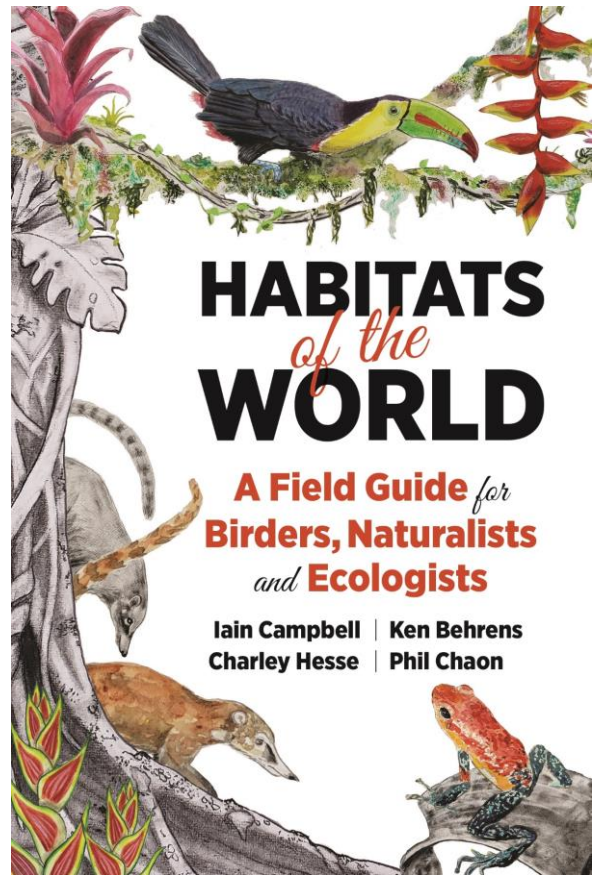
(Answer is at the very end of the newsletter)



New book by Princeton University Press
 Published 28 September 2021

Habitats of the World – A Field Guide for Birders, Naturalists and Ecologists

Described as “...the first field guide to the world’s major land habitats—189 in all. Using the format of a natural history field guide, this compact, accessible, and comprehensive book features concise identification descriptions and is richly illustrated—including more than 650 color photographs of habitats and their wildlife, 150 distribution maps, 200 diagrams, and 150 silhouettes depicting each habitat alongside a human figure, providing an immediate grasp of its look and scale. Each major habitat has an illustrated “climate box” that allows easy comparisons between habitats. Thirty other illustrated boxes present clear explanations of complex phenomena affecting habitats—from plate tectonics and mountain formation to fire regimes and climate change.”



ZOOGEOGRAPHIC REGIONS

The book is organized by zoogeographic regions (Fig. 1). These are similar to the conventional continents used by geographers and the floral kingdoms recognized by botanists but with some important differences.

There is a chapter for each zoogeographic region (except Antarctica, covered briefly in the Neotropics chapter), which contains individual accounts for all of its habitats. An alternative way to organize the book would have been by habitat category (see the Habitat Key below), but a continental approach seemed more useful, especially to travelers. The broad habitat categories, which are color-coded on the maps, and the “Habitat Affinities” section at the beginning of each account, are ways of cross-referencing similar habitats across zoogeographic regions. These are our zoogeographic regions:

- **Australasia** is everything east and south of Sulawesi and Bali. The exact placement of this line is often debated; all the islands between Borneo and New Guinea are a transition zone in the region referred to as Wallacea (Fig. 2). Deer occur on the Lesser Sundas and Sulawesi but no farther east. Monkeys reach Sulawesi, the Lesser Sundas, and a few other islands but not farther east.



Fig. 1. Zoogeographic regions used in this book.

Available here:

<https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691197562/habitats-of-the-world>

[Texas Ornithological Society members get 30% off!]

GLOBAL BIOMES WITH LATITUDE AND PRECIPITATION

The graph in Fig. 4 shows which habitats are most likely at any one latitude and precipitation level. What is interesting, and at first glance counterintuitive, is that habitats such as savannas and steppes cover massive areas of the planet but exist in narrow climatic bands, while other habitats such as temperate and subtropical rainforests are not very common across the planet but occur over wide ranges of precipitation. The other takeaway from the diagram is that some habitats, such as tundras, are heavily latitude- (and by inference temperature-) influenced yet can exist over a wide range of precipitation levels. Other habitats, such as Mediterranean scrub and semi-evergreen (including dry deciduous) forests, occur in a narrow precipitation range but exist over a wide range of latitudes (and again, by inference, temperatures). Across the world, precipitation of 1,200mm (48 in.) a year, or more importantly 100mm (4 in.) per month, seems to be a division between evergreen forests and those that undergo some stress due to (even short) periods of drought (sidebar 2.4). This diagram does not take into account variations due to elevation (sidebar 3.1) or continentality (sidebar 2.1). Please note that the size of the habitat shown is not indicative of the actual extent of that habitat over the planet.

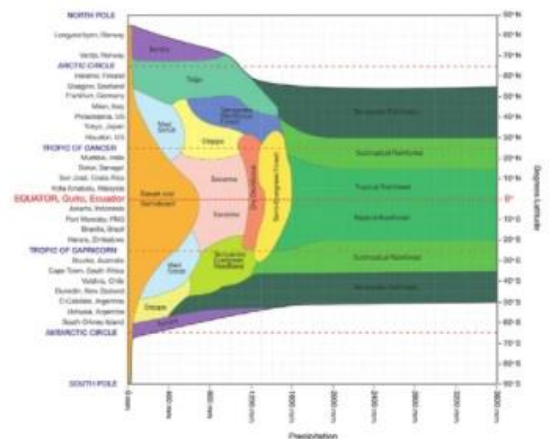


Fig. 4. Influence of latitude, precipitation, and temperature on habitats.

Upcoming 2021-2022 Ornithology Group meetings (First Monday, 7:00pm)

Nov – **Mark Kulstad**, Birds of the World: Making the Foreign Familiar — and Simpler! (Zoom)

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

Jan – **Charles Alexander**, The Wild Parrots of the Lower Rio Grande Valley (Zoom)

Learn to Bird programs offered by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

...will feature focused birding trips lead by professional guide Bryan Calk and educational presentations by AgriLife Extension faculty. In 2021, Learn to Bird will be hosted in TWO locations!

Learn to Bird West will take place at the [Kerr Wildlife Management Area](#) (6000+ acres in Kerr County), and the new Learn to Bird East will be held at [Long Acres Ranch](#) (768 acres with 2.5 miles of undeveloped land along the Brazos River) in Fort Bend County, just outside Richmond.

Max attendance at each will be 15 participants.

Texas Master Naturalists: program may be eligible for AT hours. \$375 each session covers classes, birding guides, meals (but no lodging). More info: <https://wildlife.tamu.edu/birding/learn-to-bird/>

Dates

Learn to Bird West: Oct. 8-10, 2021

Learn to Bird East: Oct. 13-15, 2021

Birding Webinars & Live Events, October 2021

2 October – 25th Anniversary Celebration of Smith Point Hawk Watch, 10am-2pm

2 October – **Fall Migration Along the Texas Coast** field trip with Cin-Ty Lee & Mary Ann Beauchemin to Quintana Neotropical and Brazoria NWR, 7:30am start, \$95, fundraiser for NDC

5 October – Tues – Partnership for International Birding's Zoom video conference on **Birding Jamaica**, with Dr. Ann Sutton-Haynes, 12:30pm CST. Email David Trently at service@pibird.com for link

8-9-10 October – Global Bird Weekend; **Learn to Bird West** at Kerr WMA

9 October – Sat - **International Migratory Bird Day**; also eBird Big Day

13 October – Wed – Texas AgriLife Extension, Birding **Cup Chat** on Facebook

13 October – Wed – Rockjumper Webinar – **Birding Arizona**, by Stephan Lorenz, 11:00am CST

13-14-15 October – **Learn to Bird East**, at [Long Acres Ranch](#) in Fort Bend County.

15 October – Fri – Learn about Northern Saw-whet Owls! “**25 years of Late Nights and Wee Owls,**” Zoom keynote by Scott Weidensaul for the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society 2021 Charter Celebration, 6:30pm CST, <https://doas.us/twenty-five-years-of-late-nights-and-wee-owls/>

16 October – Sat – **Texas Pelagic Trip #3**, leaving South Padre Island aboard the Isabella

Upcoming, repeating, local birding events – please wear a mask

Nature Discovery Center, Bellaire, Harris County – Lunch with the Birds, led by Mary Ann Beauchemin, Wednesdays 9/29-11/03, 12:00noon-1:00pm. New procedure, 15 people max, free, but register in advance: <https://naturediscoverycenter.org/event/lunch-with-the-birds-2/>

Baytown Nature Center Monthly Bird Count, Harris County – Third Thursdays: **Oct 21, Nov 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 **Oct 2, Nov 6** and Senior (50+) birding bus trips, usually on Fridays, usually 12 hours long.

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

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. **Oct 16, Nov 20**
<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: **Oct 23, Nov. 27 – Also: Mushroom walk Nov 13**

Monthly Bird Counts through Houston Audubon – You can join any of 14 different surveys in the Greater Houston urban area to learn more about bird movements and meet fellow birders.
See: <https://houstonaudubon.org/birding/bird-surveys/surveys.html>

RGV Birding Festival is Back!

The Rio Grande Valley 28th Annual Birding Festival is planned for 10-14 November 2021!
Registration opened on August 10.
Visit: <https://www.rgvbf.org/>

This year's featured artist-biologist is **Sophie Webb**, who co-authored and illustrated [A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America](#) with Steve Howell, and has contributed illustrations to many other publications.

The 2021 Bird of the Year is the Ringed Kingfisher (RIKI), *Megasceryle torquata*!





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 sat 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

Chair	Nina Rach	Nina.Rach@yahoo.com
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The Spoonbill Editor	- OPEN – temporarily Nina -	Nina.Rach@yahoo.com

Great Volunteer Opportunities at OG

1. The Ornithology Group needs someone to serve as Newsletter Editor for The Spoonbill.
2. The OG Vice-Chair 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 has stepped down as OG's Treasurer. We need someone to take this on. There is not much work involved, but a multi-year commitment would best.
4. Advertising and outreach – We could use some help in these areas!

Please contact Nina if you are interested in any of these positions, or have ideas to contribute.

October non-trivial Trivia Q answer:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed removing 23 species, including 11 birds, from the Endangered Species Act (ESA) due to extinction.

Eight of these birds were Hawaiian endemics. Avian malaria is a serious threat in Hawaii, now spreading to reach high-elevation bird communities. Info: <https://pubs.er.usgs.gov/publication/70157257>

<https://www.doi.gov/pressreleases/us-fish-and-wildlife-service-proposes-delisting-23-species-endangered-species-act-due> (29 Sept 2021)

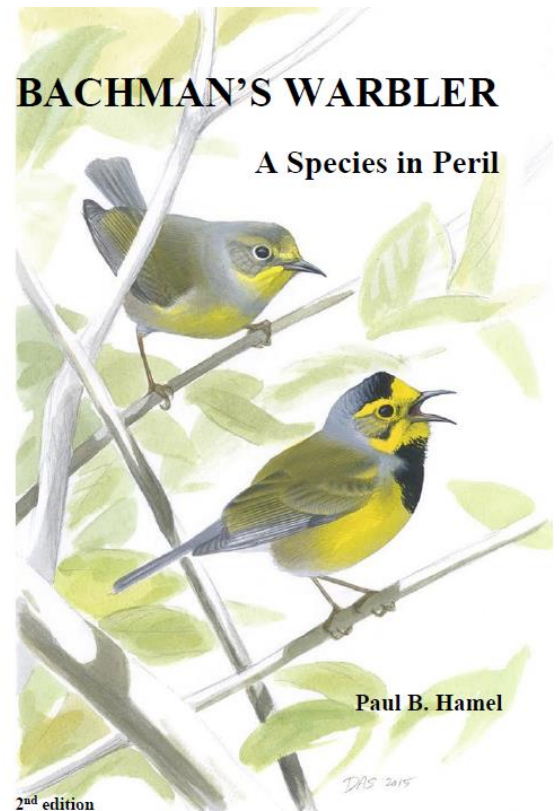
From 1937 to 1939, James T. Tanner, a doctoral student at Cornell University, researched the Ivory-billed Woodpeckers of the former Singer Tract in NE Louisiana (became Tensas River NWR in 1980). IBWO was last seen there in 1944.



Male Ivory-billed Woodpecker leaving nest
Photo by James T. Tanner - 1937

1. Ivory-billed Woodpecker – LA, AR
2. Bachman's Warbler – Florida, SC
3. Bridled White-eye – Guam
4. Kauai akialoa – Hawaii
5. Kauai nukupuu - Hawaii
6. Kaua'i 'ō'ō – Hawaii
7. Large Kauai thrush – Hawaii
8. Maui ākepa – Hawaii
9. Maui nukupu'u – Hawaii
10. Molokai creeper – Hawaii
11. Po'ouli - Hawaii

David Sibley painted the BAWAs for the cover of Paul Hamel's 2018 2nd edition (132pp) – available for free download: <https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/57290>



<https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/compass/2019/06/27/bachmans-warbler/>