

The Spoonbill

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

November 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 most monthly meetings.

1 November 2021 OG meeting

The program: **“Birds of the World: Making the Foreign Familiar — and Simpler!”** will be presented by veteran ONC/OG member Mark Kulstad

A slide show to make the birds of the world more accessible, less overwhelming, while still showing representatives from nearly every major biological region around the globe. (With only a few exceptions, the bird photos are all taken by Mark.)

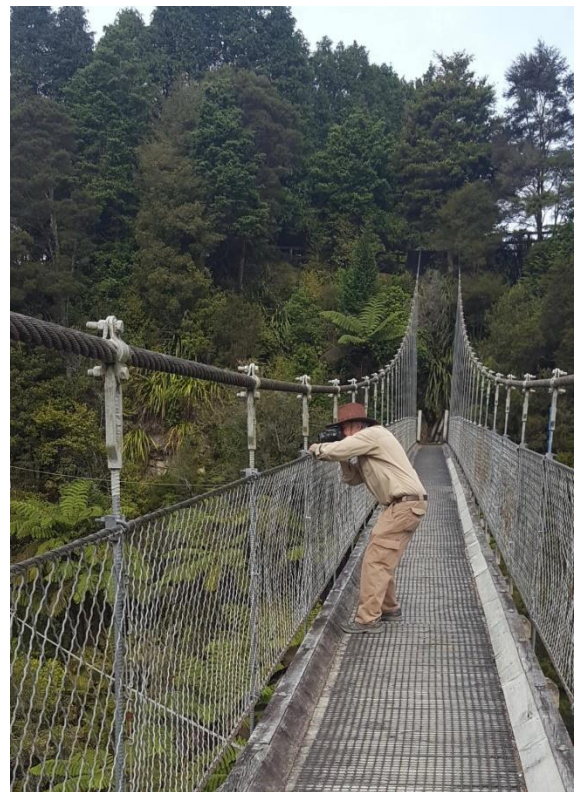
Mark worked as a professor at Rice University for 40+ becoming years, became Emeritus Professor and Research Professor of Philosophy -- took an administrative position as Academic Director of Rice University's Graduate Liberal Studies program, and is now enjoying his second retirement as an avid birder.

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.

November Trivia Q:

What US bird species are most commonly searched for using Google?

(Based on a study by of data from 2008-2017)



American (aka Caribbean) Flamingo,
Phoenicopterus ruber,
at Laguna Atascosa NWR, Oct 2021

An **American Flamingo** was seen in mid-September on South Padre Island, just after Hurricane Nicholas lashed the Texas coast.

A few weeks later, it was relocated on Oct 10 at Laguna Atascosa NWR. It was seen again on Oct 11 at GPS: 26°14'04.9"N 97°25'00.1"W and then nearly daily until 24 October.

It will hopefully be rediscovered soon!

On Tues, 26 Oct, I spent 6+ hours biking 🚲 nearly 10 miles (RT) and scoping along the caliche road in Laguna Atascosa NWR, north of General Brant Rd. Saw about ~55 bird species, but no flamingo. There is easy parking at the Prairie Trail lot, although a bit hard to see the turnoff (it's on the west side of the bridge).

It was pleasantly overcast for most of the morning. Loved the Wood Storks. Many LB Curlews and ducks, all sorts of shorebirds (waders and peeps), a few raptors. Mark Kulstad, Jenni & Ed (San Antonio) were also biking.

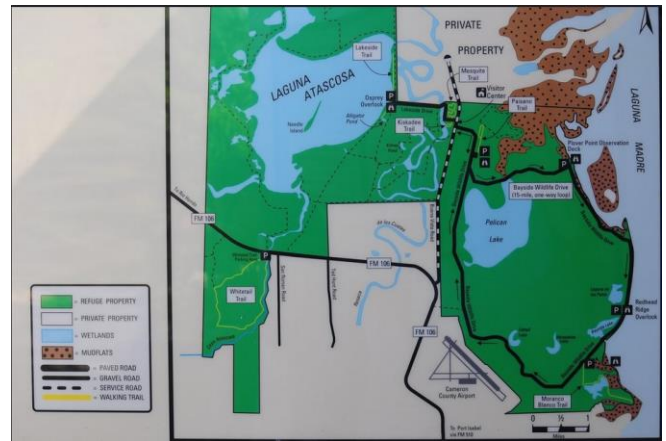
Late start (8:30) due to delay renting a mountain bike from B-Cycle, despite loading the app and creating an account on their website in advance: there are four 24-hr stations in Harlingen, but McKelvey Park not functioning. Hugh Ramsey Park bikes were accessible, fortunately. 🚲

Caveat Emptor: the "24-hr" pass is a misnomer; when you rent, you must check the bikes in/out every 60 minutes (!!!!!) at one of the four stations. Fees accrue at \$3/30 min past the first hour. - Nina

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S96742507>



The Spoonbill, November 2021



Lesser Flamingo "492," *Phoeniconaias minor*
Photo by John Humbert, posted on TPWD's Facebook page in 2019

[N.B. – The new Laguna Atascosa bird is not the same flamingo that escaped from the Sedgwick County Zoo in Wichita, Kansas on 27 June 2005. That bird was spotted in Lavaca Bay on 23 May 2018, by Ben Shepard (then an intern with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department). That bird was a **Lesser Flamingo**, brought from Tanzania as an adult, and has a yellow band with "492." It returned to Lavaca Bay in 2019, and over the years, has been seen in LA, Arkansas, and WI.

FYI – There are six species of flamingos worldwide– American/aka Caribbean, Greater, Lesser, Andean, Chilean, James/aka Puna.

OG Field Trips for members – RSVP to Lisa Li, scissortailed20@gmail.com

October 29 – Fri – Limpkins at Sheldon Lake SP; meet at boat ramp on Garrett Rd, 7:30am

November 20 – Sat – Attwater NWR, meet at headquarters parking lot, 7:30am. Mike Austin leading

December – sign up for Christmas Bird Counts!

January TBD – Laas Farm, Waller County

January TBD – NRG Cooling Ponds, Chambers County

If you are interested in birding any other locations, or want to plan a trip, contact Lisa to discuss!

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

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

Jan 3 – **Charles Alexander**, The Wild Parrots of the Lower Rio Grande Valley (Zoom)

Feb 7 – **Lisa & Li Li**, Pandemic Birding in Peru (Zoom)

Great News from Starr County, upper Rio Grande Valley! Posted by Vicky Guerra

"The final order of dismissal of the government's condemnation lawsuit against Valley Land Fund's **Salineño birding tract** was signed in late September. Title has now reverted back to **Valley Land Fund** for continued public trust and safe keeping.

Salineño hosts Lois Hughes and Merle are already there getting things ready for birders. They could use some help pulling invasive grass. If you have time to help, give them a call. 956-422-3013."

History (<https://valleylandfund.com/salineno/>)

The Salineño Bird Preserve is a 2.6 acre tract of natural riparian forest adjacent to the Rio Grande River and a world-famous birding hot spot. Winter residents and U.S. Fish & Wildlife volunteers maintain on-site feeders which attract Mexican and western Valley specialties. Each year, these feeders and this stretch of riverbank are visited by thousands of birders seeking to add these unique birds to their life list. In 1998, a portion of the property was donated to the Valley Land Fund, while the rest was purchased in 2011.

Backstory

<https://www.krgv.com/news/federal-government-moves-to-seize-part-of-saline-o-wildlife-preserve-for-border-wall/> (19 Dec 2020)

<https://www.borderreport.com/hot-topics/the-border-wall/paradise-in-limbo-land-condemnation-for-border-wall-threatens-popular-south-texas-birding-preserve/> (21 April 2021)



ABA Bird of the Year – Pileated Woodpecker, *Dryocopus pileatus*

“The ABA is proud that the Pileated Woodpecker, emblem of both the wild woods and the adaptability of birds to anthropogenically altered spaces, is our 2021 Bird of the Year.”

<https://www.aba.org/2021-bird-of-the-year-pileated-woodpecker-dryocopus-pileatus/>

ABA’s intriguing new subscription video series: OUT BIRDING with FieldGuides

The ABA says it has **65 video episodes online** already, and plans to release **3-4 each month** to subscribers. The latest posted is “Thrashers of Arizona,” on Oct 22, with Micah Riegner and Dave Stejskal. Other episodes hosted by John Coons, Bret Whitney, Tom Johnson, Melissa Roach, Jesse Fagan, Doug Gochfeld, Chris Benesh, Jonathan Meiburg, John Rowlett (Roger Tory Peterson Award winner) and others.

Watch the really terrific series & anthology trailers and read the list of available episodes here:
<https://www.outbirding.com/aba>

\$15/month, \$120/year, \$450 lifetime supporter



Birding Webinars & Live Events, October- November 2021

7 Oct – Thurs - Partnership for International Birding (PIB) webinar posted, **Birds of Cuba: Zapata Peninsula** with Arturo Kirkconnell (delivered live April 22). https://youtu.be/JLKoa_iEiMw

13 Oct – Wed – Texas AgriLife Extension, Birding **Cup Chat** with Dr. Scott McWilliams – **Zugunruhe!** A pre-migration behavior with a super fun name!
<https://www.facebook.com/agrilife.birding/videos/1215847602228786>

14 Oct – Thurs - Stephan Lorenz led a tour 4-9 Oct, **Alaska - Utqiagvik: Ross's Gull Quest**, and his 8-pg, illustrated trip report is now available on the Rockjumper website:
<https://www.rockjumperbirding.com/tripreports/destination/alaska/1/>

14 Oct – Thurs – ABA's American Birding Podcast, **Antpittas and Adventure in Colombia**, with host Nate Swick and Colombian birders Diego Calderón (*The Birders Show*) and Eliana Ardila (*Birding by Bus*). Recording available: <https://www.aba.org/antpittas-and-adventure-in-colombia/>

19 Oct – Tues – Galveston Audubon Group meeting, **Shorebirds of the Texas Upper Gulf Coast**, presented by Jim Stevenson, Rosenberg Library 7:00pm (doors open 6:30pm)

21 Oct – Thurs – Intl Crane Foundation webinar: **The 2021 Siberian Crane Autumn Migration in Eastern Russia**, with ICF Co-Founder George Archibald, Elena Ilyashenko and Maria Vladimirtseva, 7:00-8:00pm CST. www.savingcranes.org

23 Oct – Sat – Galveston Audubon Group field trip – **Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary**, Meet at 8:00am. After birding the Flats, group will drive Rettilon Road and across Hwy 87 on Kingston Beach Rd, eastern & northern edges of Horseshoe Marsh Sanctuary along Rte 108, and return to Hwy 87 on Frenchtown Rd.

27 October – Wed – Rockjumper Birding webinar: **Costa Rica**, with tour leader Lev Frid, 11:00am CST
“Over 920 species of birds have been recorded in Costa Rica...” and it is only 1/13 the size of Texas.

27 October – Wed – Tucson Audubon webinar: **Desert Purple Martins**, with Jennie MacFarland, 12-1 CST

28 October – Thurs – PIB webinar: **British Columbia Birding**, with Chris Charlesworth, 12:30pm CST

28 October – Thurs – ABA's American Birding Podcast with Nate Swick (every other Thursday)

29-30 October – Fri-Sat – **Native Plant Sale at Houston Arboretum**, 9am-4pm – attract more hummingbirds!

10-14 Nov – Wed-Sun – **Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival**, Harlingen Convention Center
Many field trips and seven speakers:

11 Nov – Thurs – **Changing Birdlife of a Tropical Frontier**, with Dr. Tim Brush, 2:30-3:30pm;
Unusual Raptor Plumages: Albinism, Melanism, Hybrids, Amelanism, and others, with Bill Clark, 4:00-5:00pm

12 Nov – Fri – **A Big Year of Birding on a Budget**, with Christian Hagenlocher, 6:15pm;
Birding the World, 20-min sessions from 2:00-5:00pm

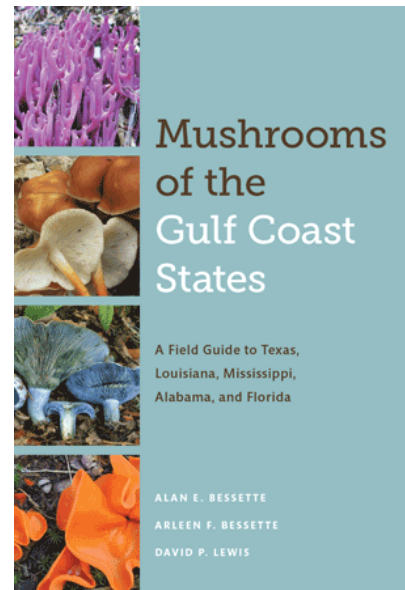
13 Nov – Sat – **Home Range Dynamics & Juvenile Dispersal of Gray Hawks** in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, with Mike Stewart, 2:30-3:30pm; **Colors and Consequences in Breeding Painted Buntings**, with Christine Gurley, 4:00-5:00pm; **Keynote: The Internet of Wings: How the Data Revolution is about to change the way you bird**, with Nathan Pieplow, 6:15pm

10 Nov – Wed – Houston Audubon Zoom webinar: **Wintering Birds on the Upper Texas Coast**, 6:30-8:00pm, \$25

11 Nov – Thurs – ABA's American Birding Podcast with Nate Swick (every other Thursday)

11 Nov – Thurs – Intl Crane Foundation webinar: **Let's Meet at the Watering Hole – A 10-Year Pictorial Journal of Meeting Wintering Whooping Cranes' Needs**, with ICF's Liz Smith and Leiden Conservation Whooping Crane Biologist Rari Marks; 11am-12noon CST. Register at: <https://savingcranes.org/events/>

13 Nov – Sat – Open House at ONC's Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary 10-5, including a Mushroom foraging and ID program with David P. Lewis, 10-1. Enjoy San Jacinto County birding!



17 Nov – Wed – PIB webinar: **Peru's Manu Biosphere** – Birding Peru's Manu Lodge and new birding opportunities at Villa Carmen, with José Antonio Padilla Reyes, 2:00pm CST, Zoom. Photo: Red-and-green Macaws, *Ara chloropterus*, at clay lick, courtesy Partnership in International Birding

18 Nov – Thurs – Houston Audubon Zoom webinar, **How Birders Can Save the World** with Richard Gibbons, \$25



25 Nov – Thurs – ABA's American Birding Podcast with Nate Swick (every other Thursday)

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 **Nov 6, Dec 4** 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. **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: **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>

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

Chair	Nina Rach	Nina.Rach@yahoo.com
Vice-chair (Programs)	- OPEN – interesting job!	Your email here!
Field Trips	Lisa Li	scissortailed20@yahoo.com
Secretary	Jean Greenhalgh	Jeanbrit01@yahoo.com
Treasurer	- OPEN – easy job!	Your email here!
Membership	Michael Honel	MichaelHonel@sbcglobal.net
ONC Board Represent.	Tira Overstreet	Oddbird47@comcast.net
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.

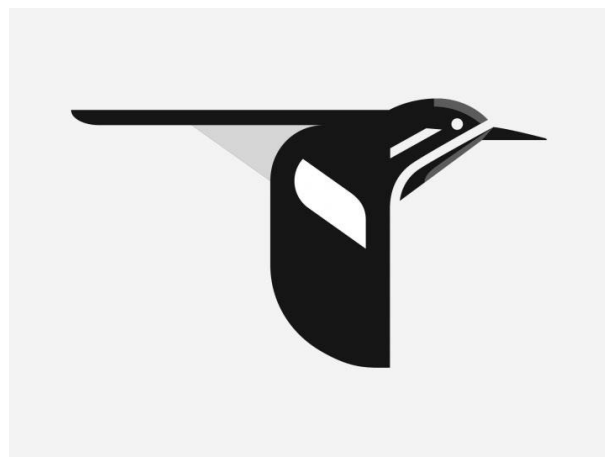
November Trivia Q answer:

Ornithologists Justin G. Schuetz (Maine) and Alison Johnson (Cornell Lab of Ornithology) studied Google Trends for American birds and published their results, “Characterizing the cultural niches of North American Birds,” on 15 April 2019 in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

“To characterize the relative popularity of 621 study species across the United States, we quantified public interest in each taxon using summaries of Google searches from 2008 to 2017 while controlling for bias arising from differences in public exposure to each species.”

Owls (Strigiformes) were the most popular Order of birds, queried, followed by falcons (Falconiformes), grouse and their relatives (Galliformes), and hawks (Accipitriformes)

The top ten species queried were: Wild Turkey, Bald Eagle, Common Raven, Mallard, Osprey, Blue Jay, Canada Goose, Northern Cardinal, American Robin, and Golden Eagle.



More info:

<https://www.pnas.org/content/116/22/10868>
and

<https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/116/22/10868.full.pdf>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2019/04/least-popular-birds-america/587221/>

