



# The Spoonbill

A Publication of the Ornithology Group (OG)  
of the Houston Outdoor Nature Club

November 2005  
Vol. 54 No. 9

## November Meeting

**Monday, November 7, 2005 -- 7:00 p.m.**

Bayland Community Center  
6400 Bissonnet, Houston

**6:30 -- Learning Corner with Glenn Olsen**  
***Female Ducks of the Upper Coast: ID Challenge***

**Program: *Digi-What?***  
**with Clay Taylor (Swarovski Optik N.A.)**

Digiscoping is the use of a digital camera held up to the eyepiece of a spotting scope, yielding telephoto photography at magnifications (20x to over 100x) unavailable to traditional photographic lenses. The program will cover the history of digiscoping, its practical applications for birders and nature watchers, and discuss the different combinations of digital cameras and spotting scopes that are possible. The field trip at 8 a.m. Sunday morning at Bolivar Flats will allow interested birders to try out different camera/scope combinations, and see whether their equipment is well-suited for digiscoping.

Clay Taylor, the Naturalist Market Manager for Swarovski Optik N.A. recently celebrated his 30th year birding and 35th year as a wildlife photographer. He has done photography for the Nature Conservancy, led nature tours for the National Audubon and Connecticut Audubon Societies, served on the Connecticut Ornithological Association Rare Records Committee, started a hawk banding project in Rochester, NY that led to the founding of Braddock Bay Raptor Research, and was the founding President of the Connecticut Butterfly Association.

## Other Events

**Sunday, November 6: OG field trip**  
Bolivar Flats (Clay Taylor)

**Wed., November 9: Midweek Trip**  
Cullinan Park (Skip Almoney)

**Saturday, November 19: OG field trip**  
Katy Prairie (Steve Gross)

**Mon., December 5: Monthly OG Meeting**  
Texas Bird Records (Keith Arnold)

**Sat., December 17: Houston CBC**

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## Minutes of the October 3, 2005 Meeting

Bayland Community Center

Attendance: 41

### About the Ornithology Group

The Ornithology Group (OG) is a division of the Outdoor Nature Club (ONC), a non-profit organization dedicated to greater knowledge about the environment and wildlife of the Upper Texas Coast. The OG is a club of individuals interested in all aspects of birding, including bird identification, listing bird sightings, competing in birding events, and preserving bird habitat. Some members study bird behavior, biology, distribution and migration, while others just enjoy watching birds. The organization is designed to accommodate these diverse birding interests. Monthly meetings and field trips provide an opportunity to interact with and learn from experts in local and international birding.

Chair:	Michael Williams	713-228-9064
Vice-Chair:	Bernice Hotman	713-782-7889
Secretary:	Shirley & Raymond Mondshine	713-774-1413
Treasurer:	Jim Winn	713-464-8057
Clearing House:	David Sarkozi	713-412-4409
Library:	Andy Scott	281-537-9690
Membership:	Margret Simmons	713-776-2511
Spoonbill:	Al Shultz	281-829-0970
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OG website: <http://www.ornithologygroup.org/>  
ONC website: <http://www.outdoornatureclub.org/>

- 1. Program:** Our guest speaker, Chris Godfrey, was introduced before the meeting by Bernice Hotman. His goal was to inform us about the state of all North American grouse species, conservation efforts on their behalf, and the importance of citizen involvement in their future welfare. He spoke at length on the North American Grouse Partnership ([www.grousepartners.org](http://www.grousepartners.org)), whose mission is to rebuild and nurture populations of NA grouse. He emphasized how important it is for each of us to become involved; and the great impact, for good, of ranchers and hunters. Brochures were distributed. Chris also explained the need for correct quail habitats in order for Bobwhite quail to survive. They need grass (not too high), brush and weeds with some open ground; they are edge species. Quail hunting in Texas is huge.
- 2. Bird sightings:** The meeting began at 8:10 with bird sightings: Avocets at Williams Shallow; Wood Storks from Kingwood bridge; Frigatebird over Houston; Sharp-shinned, Broad-winged, Red-shouldered Hawks in Houston; Katy Prairie sightings of adult Bald Eagle, White-tailed Hawk and Ladder-backed Woodpecker. Houston Arboretum had many migrants--Black-and-white and Hooded Warblers, a Winter Wren. Sightings at Quintana were Catbird, Veery, Nashville Warbler. Due to storm, not many hawks at Smith Point; SP closed for 3 weeks.
- 3.** Chairman Michael Williams introduced our newest member, **Robin Leonard**. She is currently working on a Master's degree in Sociology at the University Of Houston and wants to do a study on Birding and Birders using film as her medium. She asked for volunteers to share their birding stories in private interviews with her.
- 4. Minutes** of last meeting: approved.
- 5. Library:** no comments.
- 6. Newsletter:** submissions deadline is October 10.
- 7. Environmental Issues:** Mary Dodson was absent. Skip Almony made the group aware of how the Endangered Species Act is being axed and ask us all to let our senators know how we stand.
- 8. Field Trips:** The Pelagics trip to South Padre Island was a success. A picture was passed around of a Red-billed Tropicbird, seen on the trip. Hermann Park mid-week trip had 8 participants. Skip stated that these trips are helping people to know all the Houston birding spots. Smith Point Hawk Watch trip was cancelled because of Hurricane Rita. Mid-week trip will be at Houston Arboretum on Wednesday, October 12, Bill Saulmon leader. J.H Jones St. Park and W.G. Jones State Forest trip will be Saturday, October 15. Next monthly trip will be Bolivar Flats, Sunday, Nov. 6.
- 9.** Kathy Farr spoke of the **TOS Winter Meeting** in January 2006. She had sheets made up for registrations, field trips, and hotels. She will be needing volunteers. It was noted that TOS was founded in the 1970s by OG.
- 9. Treasury:** no report.
- 10. Wrap-up:** New member , Robin Leonard, presented a 10 min. film on birds and some of our well-known club members.
- 11. Meeting adjourned** at 8:45.

--Shirley Mondshine

--Special Thanks to **Leland Day** for a recent donation to the O.G.--

## November Field Trips

### **Sunday, November 6<sup>th</sup>: Bolivar Flats with Clay Taylor**

Clay Taylor is a representative from Swarovski and he will be teaching us some good techniques to use when taking pictures through a scope, also known as digiscoping. If you have a scope and a camera (digital (preferred) or film) that works with your scope, come out and join us and learn how to improve your digiscoping skills. Even if you just want to learn about digiscoping and don't have a camera and/or a scope, come out and join us. It should be a great morning. This is a bonus field trip and a great opportunity that you will not want to miss.

We will meet at the barricade at Bolivar Flats at 8:00 am. The best way to get there will be to take IH 45 south to Galveston and take the Bolivar Ferry across to Bolivar Peninsula. Once on the Peninsula, exit the ferry onto SH 87 and go about 3.7 miles, and turn on Rettilon Road and drive to the beach. Once you reach the beach, take a right and keep going until you reach the barricade to Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary. Be sure to bring your scope, camera, binoculars, hat, sunscreen, water, snacks, and rain gear.

### **Saturday, November 19<sup>th</sup>: Katy Prairie with Steve Gross**

Steve Gross will lead us around the beautiful land that is known as the Katy Prairie including possibly onto some private land. We will be in search of all the birds that call the prairie their home as well as some specialties like Ross's Goose, Winter Wren, Sprague's Pipit, Short-eared Owl, Henslow's, Harris's, LeConte's, and Fox Sparrows. Steve Gross is very familiar with the Katy Prairie and is willing to bird as long and as intensely as we wish to make sure we find our target species as well as other good birds. Those of you who may only want to stay for half the day will have the opportunity to leave after lunch. However, once we start birding after lunch there may not be another chance to leave until the end of the day or when everybody is ready to call it quits. For those die-hard birders we will be doing some early morning owling on this trip. So come out and enjoy what should be a great day of birding on the prairie.

We will be meeting at Paul Rushing Park, 9114 Katy Hockley Road, Katy TX. 77493. The Park is off of Katy Hockley Road just north of Longenbaugh Road. For those die-hard birders who want to participate in the owling, we will meet at the park at 6 a.m. sharp to start our owling and those of you who wish to get a later start we will be back at the park by 8 am to meet you all. Make sure to bring your binoculars, scope, camera, sturdy shoes, sunscreen, hat, water, snacks, rain gear, and a lunch. (We will break for lunch around noon. So make sure to bring a lunch if you plan on staying for the whole day.)

--Adam Wood, OG Field Trip Coordinator

713-515-1692 Birdman\_570@yahoo.com

## Chairman's Message

I hope that many of you are primed to participate in the special field trip/workshop with Clay Taylor of Swarovski at Bolivar Flats on Sunday, November 6th. This outing, in conjunction with our regular meeting on Monday, November 7th, is a fantastic opportunity to explore the possibilities that "digiscoping" can present to the birder... or any observer of wildlife for that matter.

"Digiscoping" is the marriage of the spotting scope and the digital camera, and Mr. Taylor will instruct participants on how to use these two tools together to produce quality images while out in the field. That the workshop will take place at Bolivar Flats in the fall is reason enough to participate; but to be able to see the results of our efforts at the meeting the very next day should be a special treat.

I look forward to being out on the flats on Sunday, November, 7th, to enjoy the outing with you all. And a hearty thanks to Bernice Hotman and Adam Wood for putting together such a unique program.

--Michael Williams

### **Midweek Birding Trip** with Skip Almoney: **November 9 at Cullinan Park**

The November 2005 midweek birding trip will be on November 9, 2005 at The Joseph S. & Lucie H. Cullinan Park at Oyster Creek. This is a 750 acre nature preserve that is within Houston City limits, but is just outside of Sugarland. The leader for this trip will be Skip Almoney. He will be at the designated meeting point at 8:00 a.m. and the trip will not last beyond 12 noon. We will be birding both the wetlands area from the boardwalks and also the picnic areas and the wooded areas along the entrance road. This is a good place to find Purple Gallinules along with a number of different types of ducks. There are picnic tables and an observation tower that make it an easy birding location. The meeting place will be the parking lot near the observation tower. Cullinan Park is located off of SH 6 about a mile north of the intersection of Alt. 90 in Sugarland. The gated entrance is on the west side of SH 6 and just north of the Sugarland Municipal Airport. After entering the gates, follow the road around to the parking area.

#### **OG Mid-Week Birding Trips**

November 2005	Cullinan Park
December 2005	Timbergrove Park
January 2006	Sims Bayou Nature Center
February 2006	Russ Pittman Park
March 2006	Addicks Reservoir
April 2006	Herman Brown Park
May 2006	Hermann Park

### **Brazos Bend State Park Bird Watching Hike Schedule**

Brazos Bend State Park has expanded its bird hikes for the forthcoming season. Commencing on Friday October 28, 2-3 hour hikes will be conducted at least twice a month through June 2006. Friday and Sunday hikes will meet at 8 a.m. at 40 acre lake. In addition, there will be several popular "Sunset at the Tower" events held on Saturday evenings at 5 p.m. to observe as many as a million or more incoming birds roosting at the park at dusk. Not by coincidence, the George Observatory, within the park, is open Saturday evenings as well. This provides a great "double header" opportunity for bird watchers and star gazers alike. We look forward to seeing you with family and friends.

-- Bill Godley

## Bird Watching Hike Schedule – Brazos Bend State Park

Hikes will be from 2-3 hours in length, starting 8:00 a.m.

from 40 Acre Lake Restrooms

Saturday Sunsets, 5:00 p.m. at the Observation Tower

Leaders - Park Naturalist David Heinicke, Bill Godley and/or Mark Garbutt  
of the Brazos Bend Volunteer Organization.

**Binoculars highly recommended.**

Beginners and advanced birders are invited to participate.

**Other than entry to the Park, there is no fee.**

Friday, October 28, 2005

Friday, November 18, 2005

Sunday, November 27, 2005

Friday, December 9, 2005

Sunday, December 11, 2005

Sunday, January 8, 2006

Friday, January 13, 2006

Sunday, February 5, 2006

Friday, February 10, 2006

Sunday, March 12, 2006

Friday, March 17, 2006

Sunday, April 9, 2006

Friday, April 14, 2006

Friday, May 5, 2006

Sunday, May 7, 2006

Friday, June 2, 2006

Sunday, June 4, 2006

### Saturday Sunset at the Tower

Saturday, December 03, 2005

Saturday, December 31, 2005

Saturday, January 21, 2006

Saturday, February 12, 2006

## September 16-18<sup>th</sup> 2005 Quarterly Field Trip Report

On a hot September 16 morning, four participants left Houston for South Padre Island. The other three participants met the rest of the group the next morning at the pier for the pelagic trip. On the way to the hotel we stopped for a picnic lunch at a rest area along SH 281, after a trip through what used to be known as Hawk Alley (SH 285) between US 77 and SH 281. Only a couple Harris's Hawks and a Crested Caracara were seen along Hawk Alley. During lunch we enjoyed good looks at Summer Tanagers, Green Jays, Lesser Goldfinches, Common Ground Doves, a Ladder-backed Woodpecker, White-eyed Vireo, and the Mexican race of the Carolina Wren. Before going to the hotel we decided to stop at Santa Ana and bird for a little over an hour because it was so hot. Highlights were Groove-billed Anis, Plain Chachalacas, a Long-billed Thrasher, Brown-crested Flycatchers, and Couch's Kingbirds.

The next morning we arrived at the dock at 5:30 a.m. for the pelagic trip. The boat left port just a little after 6:00 and we saw our first birds, two male Magnificent Frigatebirds perched on a shrimp boat, around 10 a.m. Also around the shrimp boat were Bottle-nosed and Spotted Dolphins -- a very nice sight. We reached pelagic waters a little before 2 p.m. and promptly found the bird of the trip, a near-adult Red-billed Tropicbird. On our way back in we found a Red-necked Phalarope. Other highlights were several Bridled Terns, two Cory's Shearwaters, and flocks of migrant birds.

On our way back the next day we stopped at Laguna Atascosa to try and find a Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher that had been reported there just two days earlier. Unfortunately we were not able to find it. It was a good trip with about 60 birds seen in all.

*~Adam Wood, Field Trip Coordinator*

## January Quarterly Field Trip to the Lower Rio Grande Valley January 26-29, 2006

David Poteet has graciously volunteered to lead this trip. He has been birding in this region for many years and has a wealth of knowledge about where to find good birds in the Valley. We will be birding in some areas where there are very few opportunities to bird. The focus of this trip will be on the Valley specialties and some rarities, and we should be able to find them all. If you have a bird that you particularly want to see, please let us know and we will try to accommodate your request. This trip you do not want to miss.

There will be a \$23.50 registration fee for this trip. The itinerary, accommodation, and other important information is below.

This trip is limited to eight people on a first-come, first-serve basis. I will start a waiting list once that number is reached. I do ask that you don't send me your registration fee unless you are absolutely sure you will be going on the trip. If I don't receive your registration fee a week before the trip on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January, you will forfeit your spot on the trip and I will take the next person on the waiting list.

Please make checks payable to me and send them to:

Adam Wood  
2525 Old Farm Road Apt. 1823  
Houston, Tx. 77063

The host hotel for the trip is:

**Best Western Palm Aire Hotel & Suites**  
415 S. International Blvd. at Exp. 83  
Weslaco, Tx. 78599  
(956) 969-2411

Be sure to mention "Ornithology Group" to get the \$56 group rate. Breakfast Buffet included on Friday morning at 6 a.m...; 7 a.m. on weekends. Courtyard Restaurant is open 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

*--Adam Wood, Field Trip Coordinator*

### Trip Itinerary

**Thursday, January 26:** For those who want to caravan down to RGV and bird along the way, meet at **7:00 a.m.** in the parking lot of Applebee's Restaurant located on West I-10 at Fry Road

**Lunch** at Cotton's BBQ in Robstown, TX (near Corpus Christi)

**Arrive:** Best Western Palm Aire Hotel & Suites about 2 p.m. Check in and/or bird at Frontera Audubon (open until 4 PM) or Allan Williams Home in Pharr. (\$10 donation per person).

**Friday, January 27:** Breakfast Buffet begins at 6 a.m. **Meet in hotel lobby at 7 a.m.**

Bird at Anzaldaus County Park or Santa Ana NWR. **Bring your own lunch**--we will eat lunch at either place. Return mid-afternoon and after a short break **meet at lobby at 4:30 p.m.** to bird by car for a Parrot Tour of Weslaco. Possible Red-crowned, Red-lored, Lilac-crowned, Yellow-headed, White-fronted Parrots!

**Saturday, January 28:** **Meet at 5:30 a.m.** Breakfast stop will be on the way to Salineno, Tx about a 2 hr drive west. The DeWinds have feeders there (donation requested). Possible Hook-billed Kite, Brown Jay, all 3 orioles, sparrows, Red-billed Pigeon. Other stops might be Roma Bluffs, El Chapeno RV Park (although it might be closed), and Falcon State Park. **Bring your own lunch.** Return mid-afternoon. After a short break we could bird Frontera Audubon (open until 7 p.m.) and or Allen Williams house ( \$10 donation per person) or other place for rarities.

**Sunday, January 29:** **Check out and leave at 6:30 a.m.** Stop at Inn at El Canelo north of Raymondville, TX, arriving around 8 a.m. (Ferruginous Pygmy Owl and possible Sprague's Pipit, and lots of sparrows). **Fee is \$30 per person, payable at the ranch.** We will leave around noon and depart for home.

# From The Spoonbill's Past

Compiled by Skip Almoney



THE  
SPOONBILL

## *Fifty Years Ago*

### **Ornithology Group Meeting**

The Ornithology Group met October 6 on the terrace of the home of Jimmy Murray. Josiephine Wilkin give a brief discussion of the new check lists which she and a committee are preparing. Leota Stilwell, Field Trip Chairman, announced that the next field trip would be held October 23 in the Hockley area, with Carrie Holcomb as leader. Leota stated that civilization was fast encroaching on many good birding areas nearby and that it was becoming necessary to go greater distances from the city to find the birds. The areas of Camp Strake and Huntsville State Park were discussed as sites of possible future field trips.

Armond Yramategui stated that although our efforts to prevent the Air Force from flash-bombing the area near the Aransas Refuge were bringing encouraging results, the fight was not yet completely won. He said that we should still "write our Congressman."

After the business was completed the meeting developed into a surprise birthday party for our Field Trip Chairman, Leota, complete with birthday cake, candles and punch.

It was a beautiful night and a beautiful setting. Frequent flashes of distant lightning were reflected in the tree-tops and both business and social portions of the meeting were occasionally interrupted by the deep voices of two barred owls calling to each other in the woods back of the Murray home.

## **Forty Years Ago**

### **Possible Sutton's Warbler** by Charlotte Johnson

September 27, 1965, in the afternoon, Janet Kepner and I observed a bird in Fondren Woods, which at the least was a possible hybrid between the Yellow-throated and Parula Warblers, and at the most was a possible Sutton's Warbler.

The back of this bird had a large greenish patch, such as the Parula. The rest of the back and top of the head were bluish-gray like the Parula. There was a large white stripe over the eye on the superciliary line, and a small white eye-ring under the eye like the Yellow-throated. The throat and upper breast were yellow, forming a bib like the Yellow-throated. There was a dark eye-line and from the eye-line down the side of the neck was a large dark area bordering the yellow bib. This dark neck area was similar to that of the Yellow-throated, and appeared to me to probably be black. Behind this blackish neck area there was no white area on the neck, such as the Yellow-throated has. There were two white wing-bars and some small dark markings on the flanks which I observed only from underneath the bird. The belly area was white.

September 29, Margaret Anderson and I looked for this bird without success. On October 2, Margaret Anderson and her daughter found either this bird or a similar one in Fondren Woods.

<<The **Clearing House** for September 2005 will be published in the December issue.>>  
<<*The Spoonbill* apologizes for the delayed report.>>

**TO START OR RENEW A MEMBERSHIP:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

	<i><b>Individual</b></i>	<i><b>Family</b></i>
ONC Annual Dues:	\$ 8.00	\$ 15.00
OG Annual Dues:	\$ 14.00	\$ 19.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ 22.00</b>	<b>\$ 34.00</b>

Additional contributions are welcome in any amount.

Send to:

Outdoor Nature Club  
PO Box 270894  
Houston TX 77277-0894

Membership questions? Contact Margret Simmons  
phone 713-776-2511  
msimmons@compassnet.com

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**msimmons@compassnet.com**

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