



The Spoonbill

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

August 2006
Vol. 55 No. 6

August Meeting

Monday, August 7, 2006 -- 7:00 p.m.

Bayland Community Center
6400 Bissonnet, Houston

**6:30 -- Learning Corner – with Mark Klym:
Hummingbirds** (*bring your field guides*)

Program: Chasing Hummingbirds Across Texas
Speaker: **Mark Klym**

Texas has a wonderful diversity of hummingbird species, second to none in the nation, but some areas of Texas are more likely to see some birds than others. Even within neighborhoods, one garden will be swarming with hummingbirds, while a nearby garden, even with a well-maintained feeder, may be ignored. Why is this? A slide program by Mark Klym at our next OG meeting may answer this question. Looking at each of the 18 species that have been found in Texas, Klym explores their habitat needs in an effort to determine how we can make our gardens more welcoming to these birds.

Mark Klym is coordinator of the Texas Wildscapes and Texas Hummingbird Roundup programs at Texas Parks and Wildlife. He received baccalaureate degrees in Biological Science and in Fisheries and Wildlife Management from Lake Superior State University in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. Mark followed the hummingbirds to Texas in 1999 to work with Texas Parks and Wildlife. He is coauthor of the recently published book "Hummingbirds of Texas" by Texas A&M Press, as well as author or editor of a number of publications by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Other Events

August 19: Matagorda County
with Marilyn Sitz

September 11: OG Meeting
Rich Kostecke - The Nature Conservancy

September 16: Smith Point Hawk Watch
with Bill Saulmon

September 23: Brazos Bend State Park
beginning birder / new member trip
with Adam Wood

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Minutes of the May 1, 2006 Meeting

Tracy Gee Community Center

Attendance: 32

1. **Learning Corner:** Adam Wood discussed "Those Confusing Blackbirds" and how to distinguish Boat-tailed and Great-tailed Grackles, Rusty and Brewer's Blackbirds, Tricolored and Red-winged Blackbirds, and Brown-headed and Bronzed Cowbirds. Adam also gave information about storing and playing bird vocalizations on an iPod.

2. **Welcome:** Chairman Williams welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 7:14 p.m. asking for bird sightings. Michael saw a Peregrine Falcon from just a few feet away in the Medical Center. Brewster's Warbler was seen at Russ Pitman Park. Skip Almoney watched a flock of warblers at the water drip at Hooks Sanctuary that included eight Chestnut-sideds, six Common Yellowthroats, two Golden-wingeds, a Hooded and a Brewster's. Paul Sellin saw a Great Kiskadee on the Katy Prairie. Carolyn Evans saw a Prairie Warbler at Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary. Adam Wood had 500 Buff-breasted and 35 Upland Sandpipers off F.M. 529, and while Skip was in Hawaii, he saw a Wild Turkey attack an occupied car for several minutes. On April 22, Adam Wood and John Schneider had 21 warbler species at coastal hotspots and saw the Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher at TOS Sabine Woods. The April 29 fallout brought 10 warblers and 11 other migrants to Kathy Farr's yard.

3. **Membership:** All were reminded to give any updated information for the directory to Margret Simmons.

4. **Minutes** of the April meeting were approved.

5. **Spoonbill:** Al Shultz said that the newsletter was mailed early, but that many people received it late anyway. The deadline for submissions for the next issue is July 10.

6. **Field Trips:** On the Jasper County trip, all had good looks at Bachman's Sparrows and Brown-headed Nuthatch, as well as a juvenile Bald Eagle. Adam and another observer also saw Red-cockaded Woodpecker. The mid-week trip to Herman Brown Park was enjoyed by all who went. The next mid-week trip is to the bayou parkland area of Hermann Park, where Great Horned Owl, Bronzed Cowbird and other species can be seen. The Galveston trip was led by Dwight Peake and attended by eight other birders; they met at Kempner Park, then went to East Beach and Appfel Park for shorebirds and to private property and Lafitte's Cove for songbird migrants. Though the beach winds were strong, with birds scattered around, they saw Semipalmated and Wilson's Plovers, two Red Knots, about 300 Common Terns, 15 Black Terns and a few Royal, Caspian and Sandwich Terns; ponds along Stewart Road turned up White-rumped, Least and Semipalmated Sandpiper, Gadwall, and American Widgeon; at Lafitte's Cove and on private property, there were 21 warbler species, including Cerulean, plus Glossy Ibis and Pectoral Sandpiper. Adam asked for any completed Field Trip Evaluation Forms to be turned in.

7. **Budget:** Jim Winn handed out the budget for the coming fiscal year. The line "Donations for others" was clarified. Our speakers are normally paid a fee, but sometimes they designate another recipient, and in those cases, that money is currently listed under "Donations for others" instead of "Speakers."

8. **Miscellaneous:** Bernice Hotman and Kathy Farr asked anyone to contact them with ideas for program topics or learning corner topics, respectively. Also, Bernice attended the Texas Ornithological Society (TOS) meeting in Laredo and said that the town was very birder-friendly.

9. **Program:** Michael introduced Lynn Barber, who described her record-breaking 2005 Texas big year. Ms. Barber totaled 524 species, pending confirmation of a Vaux's Swift (see www.lynnbarber.com for list of all species observed). Other totals included 90,000 miles driven for birding (an average of 247 mi./day), 1,263 miles walked for birding, and 3,101 hours birding (an average of 8.5 hrs./day). She gave an entertaining and enlightening talk and a great slideshow, with all the photos taken by herself.

10. **Meeting adjourned** at 8:48 p.m.

--John Schneider

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
Email: og_spoonbill@earthlink.net

OG website: <http://www.ornithologygroup.org/>

ONC website: <http://www.outdoornatureclub.org/>

August 19 Trip to Matagorda County

Marilyn Sitz will lead us on a birding expedition around Matagorda County. Last year we had a very successful trip to the Mad Island Marsh Preserve in Matagorda County, the site of the highest Christmas Bird Count in the nation for the past four years. This trip should be just as successful. If you are a beginning or novice birder, or if you are interested in possibly becoming a member of the OG, this will be a good trip for you to join us on because it will be an easy-paced trip with no target birds requiring special skills. So come out and join us for a nice morning of birding in Matagorda County, one of the birdiest counties in Texas.

We will meet at the Matagorda County Birding Nature Center at 8 a.m. The nature center is 1.7 miles west of Bay City on SH 35. If you wish to carpool, I will be at the Katy Prairie Conservancy Headquarters at 3015 Richmond Avenue at 5:30 and will leave by 6:00 a.m. Please call me and let me know to expect you, and try to be at the Katy Prairie Conservancy before 6:00 a.m. if you are planning on carpooling. We will be birding at least until noon and I will be willing to stay longer if some in the group would like to continue birding after lunch.

Be sure to bring your binoculars, hat, sunscreen, water, a lunch, spotting scope, camera, and snacks.

Quarterly Trip to Granger, October 27-29

Tim Fennell will lead us on a birding expedition of Granger and the surrounding areas in search of the Mountain Plover and late fall migrants. He has been a science teacher in Austin for the past 20 years and has been birding the Granger area intensively since 1997 when he adopted it as his local "patch." He has led field trips to the Granger area for various birding organizations including the Texas Ornithological Society, the Travis Audubon Society and the Northeast Texas Field Ornithologists. He has taught a class on shorebird identification for the Travis Audubon Society since 1998. We should see some good birds over the course of the weekend and birding in the hill country is always a treat. So come out and join us for a nice weekend of birding in the Granger area of central Texas.

Hotel arrangements are currently being worked out and more details will be in the September issue of *The Spoonbill* as well as posted on the message board on the OG website. This trip will be limited to 14 people and there will be a \$25 registration fee plus a \$10 donation to the OG. Please make registration fee checks out to me and send them to Adam Wood, 2525 Old Farm Road, Houston, TX 77063. The \$10 donation should be made out to the Ornithology Group and given to me Friday night at the hotel. Be sure to bring your binoculars, hat, sunscreen, water, lunches, spotting scope, camera, and snacks.

--Adam Wood, OG Field Trip Coordinator birdman_570@yahoo.com 713-515-1692

OG Monthly Field Trips 2006-2007

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Leader</i>
8/19/2006	Coastal Shorebirds and Flycatchers (Matagorda/Guadalupe Delta WMA)	Marilyn Sitz
9/16/2006	Smith Point Hawk Watch	Bill Saulmon
9/23/2006	Beginning Birder Trip I: Brazos Bend SP	Adam Wood
10/21/2006	Quintana/Brazoria NWR	Adam Wood
10/14/2006	Beginning Birder Trip II: Little Thicket Nature Preserve	Adam Wood
11/18/2006	Sheldon Lake SP	TPWD Guide
12/16/2006	Houston CBC	(various)
1/20/2007	Brazos Bend SP	Bill Godley
2/17/2007	Texas City Prairie Preserve (Attwater's Prairie Chicken)	TNC Guide
3/18/2007	Bolivar and Texas City Dike	Adam Wood
4/21/2007	Sabine Woods & McFaddin NWR	Steve Mayes
5/19/2007	Kayaking in Galveston	Artist Boat Inc.

OG Quarterly Field Trips 2006-2007

10/27-29/2006	Central Texas: Hornsby Bend/Granger Lake and Alcoa Lake Area	Tim Fennell
1/26-29/2007	NE Texas: Mt. Vernon/Lake Tawakoni/Village Creek Drying Beds	Ron Baltzegar
5/4-6/2007	Breeding Warblers of East Texas	TBD

Next Summer: July 22-29, 2007 -- Tour to SE Arizona

Brennan Mulrooney of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT) will lead us on a birding tour of Southeast Arizona. Brennan has been leading this tour to Southeast Arizona for the past couple of years and knows the area very well. If there is a good bird around he will know where to find it. Southeast Arizona is truly one of the great birding destinations in the United States and July is the best time of year to bird Arizona. It is possible to see as many 13 species of hummingbirds, as well as other sought-after U.S. birds and Mexican specialties that routinely show up in Southeast Arizona. This special summer trip is limited to 14 people and will cost \$1795 plus airfare. This is a trip that you will not want to miss. If you are interested in participating, please let me know and I will give you further details about how to register for this trip. The deadline for registering is January 15, 2007. FYI, this will be a private trip for the OG providing that we can fill all 14 spaces.

--Adam Wood, OG Field Trip Coordinator birdman_570@yahoo.com 713-515-1692

Galveston Island Trip Report

The Houston Ornithology Group had its April trip to Galveston Island on April 29. The trip was led by Dwight Peake and eight participants were treated to one of the best fallouts in some time. A strong line of thunderstorms passed over the island around noon, an opportune time for us to stop for lunch at Michael Burgers on the Seawall to wait out the storm system.

Highlights included 20 species of warblers, three species of vireos, a Glossy Ibis, Solitary Sandpipers and a Pectoral Sandpiper at Lafitte's Cove; Gadwall, American Wigeon, and White-rumped Sandpiper in the ponds along Stewart Road; Stilt Sandpiper in the pond along Harbor Side Drive; Red Knot and Common and Black Terns at Apffel Park on East Beach. For the whole trip we totaled 112 species, but that is conservative because with all the activity it was hard to see everything there at the same time. It was a nice predicament to be in. A big thanks goes out to Dwight Peake for leading this trip, and to the weather gods for providing us with all the right conditions for a truly wonderful fallout.

--Adam Wood

Big Thicket Trip Report

Tom Kihn led me and four other participants for the Houston Ornithology Group's field trip to the Turkey Creek and Lance Rosier Units of the Big Thicket National Preserve on May 13. It was a nice and sunny day, although it got a little warm as the afternoon wore on. We did not do too well on the breeding warblers -- we only saw two Hooded Warblers, a Black and White Warbler, a Prothonotary Warbler and several Northern Parulas. The Northern Parula was the most numerous breeding warbler, with three males seen and at least six others heard singing throughout the day. The highlight of the trip was a male Prairie Warbler seen very close along Gore Store Road, and another heard singing farther away. This was a life bird for most of the participants, and we got great looks at it, including a look from about two feet away. Other notables were Greater Roadrunner, Gray Catbird, two Summer Tanagers, Blue Grosbeak, White-eyed and Red-eyed Vireos, and a late migrant Magnolia Warbler. We saw 36 species for the day. All in all, it was a nice day of birding in the lovely Big Thicket. A big thanks goes out to Tom Kihn for leading this trip.

--Adam Wood

2006-2007 OG Meetings and Programs

Aug. 7	Mark Klym	Chasing Hummers Across Texas
Sept. 11	Rich Kostecke	The Nature Conservancy: Fort Hood, Texas, and Beyond
Oct. 2	Robin Leonard	The Birding Culture
Nov. 6	Howard Laidlaw	Birding Panama
Dec. 4	George Bristol	The State of Texas State Parks
Jan. 8	Dr. Tim Brush	The Nesting Birds of the Lower Rio Grande Valley
Feb. 5	John Coffman	The Northern Aplomado Falcon: Natural History and Conservation
Mar. 5	Carol Jones	The Great Texas Birding Classic
Apr. 2	Bob Ohmart	The Birds of Alaska
May 7	Adam Wood	Birding Southeast Arizona

Bird Lists and Citizen Science

In 2005 the Houston Audubon Society formed a Citizen Science Committee to conduct bird surveys and manage and analyze associated data for non-profit and governmental entities to assist in scientific research to conserve bird species and promote habitat conservation. Anyone who birds and keeps lists of their sightings can contribute data toward these goals.

Specific projects and leaders in the Houston area are:

- Armand Bayou bird survey, leader Stennie Meadours
- Bear Creek Pioneer Park Bird Checklist, leader Fred Collins
- Bolivar Bird Survey, leader Johnnie Green
- Buffalo Bayou Bird Survey, leader Glen Olsen
- E-bird data input, leader John Berner
- 11th Street Park - Heights, Bird Survey and Checklist, leader Mary Dodson
- Eskimo Curlew Search project, leader Ted Eubanks
- GCBO Ivory-billed Woodpecker Search, leader John Arvin
- Green's Bayou Wetland Mitigation bird survey, leader John Biesmann
- IBA Spring Creek Greenway Project, leader Fred Collins...looking for a replacement!
- Ima Hogg Bird sanctuary survey, leader Bob McFarland
- Texas Simultaneous Winter Shorebird Survey, leader Ted Eubanks
- Summer and Winter Backyard Bird Surveys, leader Bob McFarland

The future status of West 11th Street Park is uncertain. A volunteer organization (Friends of West 11th Street Park <http://www.west11thstreetpark.org/>) is trying to raise funds to help buy the land from the Houston Independent School District to ensure that it remains a wildlife-friendly urban park, and to prevent its sale to developers.

We encourage anyone who is interested to come to one of the Committee's monthly meetings, which are announced on Texbirds and take place on the third Monday of each month at a restaurant in the Houston area. The next meeting will be Monday evening, August 21, on the south side of Houston. The specific restaurant will be announced on Texbirds about a week before the event.

We also encourage anyone who keeps bird observation lists to turn them in to eBird. This online database already contains hundreds of thousands of observation lists. Several hundred commonly visited "Birding Sites" are available for Texas. You can also store sightings of personal birding locations (such as your backyard) to a point on a map. You first set up a free personal account in less than 5 minutes. Go to <http://www.ebird.org/tx/>.

--Fred Collins and John Berner

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Editor's Note: In spite of the popularity of eBird and the number of bird records it contains, some locations of interest on the Upper Texas Coast are not well represented, either in eBird or in the OG's own Clearing House database. One example is Bear Creek Pioneer Park, a sizeable tract with many notable birds and frequent visits by birders, yet a park for which the county authority does not even have a bird checklist. Another particular focus is Bolivar Flats, a familiar and popular birding destination and in all seasons an important wildlife area. Coastal development, particularly the renewed proposal for a bridge connecting Galveston Island and the Bolivar Peninsula by road, remains a serious threat because of the disturbance and habitat loss that it might cause. Documenting the birds in this area on a daily, seasonal and yearly basis is vital to continuing conservation efforts.

Contributing your bird lists is not only a fun way to share your sightings -- it also adds valuable information for protecting birds and their habitat.

Obsession – Magnificent or Otherwise

The Chase, or Confessions of a Lister Part 1

The years 2002 and 2003 may have been the Years of the Horse and the Ram, but for me they became the year (October to October) of the Chase. I have no idea exactly how many birds I saw in this twelve-month period, but it was an enjoyable time. I do know that in 2002 I had 436 species, and 480 in 2003. I was not particularly trying for any maximum number in either year.

Though I had been on a few pelagic trips off California and North Carolina, the best opportunity for new birds was to get out on some more pelagic trips. Therefore, I booked trips out of Westport, Washington, and Newport, Oregon in October 2002. Arriving early, I spent a day birding the area around Hoquiam and Grays Harbor NWR in coastal Washington. A Sharp-tailed Sandpiper had been reported at the Hoquiam sewage treatment plant, but my search was unsuccessful. On the Westport pelagic trip the next day we had fairly good weather and found numerous species, including Pacific Loon, Common Murre, Red Phalarope, Pigeon Guillemot, South Polar Skua; Sooty, Pink-footed and Buller's Shearwaters; Northern Fulmar, Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers; and Cassin's and Rhinoceros Auklets. Three life birds seen were Black-footed Albatross, Flesh-footed Shearwater, and Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel. An unusual find was a Brown Booby perched on some driftwood, apparently a second state record. Gulls included Heerman's, California, Glaucous-winged and Sabine's Gulls and Black-legged Kittiwake. Returning to Westport in late afternoon, we (my wife went along even though she spent most of her time in motel rooms since I was feeling guilty about

leaving her at home while I went gallivanting around the country) had a three to four hour drive south along the coast to Newport.

The weather was not quite as good for the Newport trip. The wind and waves were such that on the return part of the trip most of the group did little or no birding but simply stayed in the cabin, sheltered from the spray. Though no new birds were found, we saw essentially the same birds as on the Westport trip. There were two birders from New Jersey whom I had met on Attu in 1998 and again on pelagic trips out of North Carolina in 2001. It seems amazing, but I guess it should not be so surprising how you run into birding friends time and time again no matter where you are.

Another Sharp-tailed Sandpiper had been reported at Brandon Marsh, Oregon. However, you needed to be there at low tide, which was about 7 a.m. We got up about three and headed south along the coast. Driving Highway 101 in the fog and dark is not fun, and you miss the magnificent scenery. We arrived in time, but despite wading out in the marsh, my search was again unsuccessful – still need that bird.

Overall it was a great trip, with three life birds and approximately 80 species total.

-- Bob Ohmart

(More of Bob Ohmart's account of his "year of the chase" will appear in future issues of *The Spoonbill*. --Editor)

Outdoor Nature Club
Ornithology Group
P.O. Box 270894
Houston TX 77277-0894

TO START OR RENEW A MEMBERSHIP:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-Mail: _____

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

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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	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Family</i>
ONC	\$ 8.00	\$ 15.00
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