



The Spoonbill

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

September 2007
Vol. 56 No. 7

September Meeting

Monday, September 10, 2007 -- 7:00 p.m.

Bayland Community Center
6400 Bissonnet, Houston

6:30 -- Learning Corner – Michael Williams

Program: The State of Texas State Parks

George L. Bristol is the founder and President / Executive Director of the Texas Coalition for Conservation. He has more than 35 years of experience in business as an executive, officer and board member and as a political organizer, fund-raiser and lobbyist, and conservation has played a significant part of that experience. He is also an award-winning photographer and poet, often using nature as the subject of his work.

As a young man he worked at Glacier National Park, which led to a lifetime commitment to parklands and conservation. He was named to the Texas Conservation Foundation by Governor Mark White in 1984 and chaired the Foundation until 1988. His experience includes a six-year appointment to the National Parks Foundation Board of Directors by President Bill Clinton and Secretary of Interior Bruce Babbitt. He presently serves on the Board of Directors of the Glacier National Park Fund, and was recently elected Chairman of the Board of Directors of Audubon Texas. He is Vice-Chairman of the Texas State Park Advisory Committee, which in August completed a report that calls for a bold ten-year plan to increase funding for our state and local parks.

Through the work and funding of the Texas Coalition for Conservation, George Bristol has been one of the leading advocates and educators for substantial and sustainable funding for parklands.

(George Bristol's program is rescheduled from last December. –Editor)

Other Events

Sept. 4: Swift Night Out with HAS
at Pershing Middle School

**Sept. 13-16: Hummer/Bird Celebration
and OG Quarterly Trip**, Rockport

Sept. 22: Smith Point Hawk Watch
(with John Arvin)

**Sept. 29: Beginning Birder/New Member
Trip 1** to Cullinan Park

**Oct. 13: Beginning Birder/New Member
Trip 2** to Galveston Island

Oct. 20: Kleb Woods with Fred Collins

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▪ **A Choice?** -- Someone asked me once, if I had to choose between Ornithology Group and Houston Audubon Society, which one I would join. At the time I was speechless. I didn't want to have to make a choice. I am a member of both and like it that way. But those aren't my only two "birding" groups. And I was surprised to learn that not all OG members know about some of the others.

TOS: Texas Ornithological Society. I particularly enjoy their meetings in places where I might not otherwise bird, and they usually have field trip access to properties not generally open to the public. The organization also maintains Sabine Woods and four other sanctuaries. www.texasbirds.org will tell you all about TOS. See also page 6 of last month's newsletter. Yes, their fall meeting this year is at Smith Point and is co-hosted by:

FOAR: Friends of Anahuac Refuge. Do you go to the Willows at Anahuac in the spring? And how many times have you driven around Shoveler Pond? Probably the other national wildlife refuges in the area have "friends" organizations but this is the one to which I happen to belong. See

www.friendsofanahuacnwr.org for more information.

GCBO: Gulf Coast Bird Observatory: Conservation, Stewardship and Partnership in and around the Gulf of Mexico. Think Smith Point Hawk Watch and Xtreme Hummingbird Xtravaganza and great speakers for our programs. www.gcbo.org has lots information on the Great Texas Birding Classic as well as the organization itself.

ABA: American Birding Association. To be honest, I have a hard time keeping up with reading their very informative magazine but their meetings always are in tempting birding locations around the US. And this group led me to

IFO: Institute of Field Ornithology which has dynamite birding seminar trips. This is the group responsible for the owl workshop I attended that led to Denver Holt of the Owl Research Institute coming to Houston to do two owl programs.

Then there is the American Bird Conservancy, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Hawk Watch International, and probably many more with which I am not familiar.

The first point of this is that both Houston Audubon Society and TOS are rumored to have gotten their start from OG. Who out there knows that history? Would you please write a few words about it for this publication, so those bits of history might be preserved and so that we all might know the stories.

The second point is that we spend our time and money where our heart lies. And, "generationally" speaking, Boosters (pre-1945 born) and Baby Boomers are joiners but Busters, Generation Xers, and Millennialists are not joiners of organizations. What does that mean for the future of these organizations and others? Take advantage of what your favorite birding and conservation groups have to offer. Support them all if you are so inclined, but please stay with OG. If you are choosing only one, thank you for making it Ornithology Group!

--Bernice Hotman, OG Chairperson

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:	Bernice Hotman	713-782-7889
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OG website: <http://www.ornithologygroup.org/>

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

Minutes of the August 6, 2007 Meeting

Bayland Community Center

Attendance: 73

1. **Learning Corner:** Cin-Ty Lee, professor at Rice University, presented slides that focused on identifying shorebirds by general impression: shape, posture, behavior and facial impression.
2. **Sightings:** Bernice Hotman opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with bird sightings. Sightings included a Yellow Warbler at Lafitte's Cove; an Orchard Oriole, Painted Bunting, and Swallow-tailed Kites at Brazos Bend; Mississippi Kites in Friendswood and Gessner, three Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in Clear Lake, Chimney Swifts at Whole Foods on Bellaire and Pershing Middle School chimney, Northern Gannet (which was rescued), Screech Owls at 3 a.m., and Black Rail. Pam Smolen announced that September 4th would be the official Chimney Swift Night at Pershing Middle School and encouraged everyone to come.
3. **Minutes** of the May meeting were accepted as printed in the Spoonbill.
4. **Budget:** Jim Winn distributed a budget for the fiscal year ended May 31, 2008. The budget was very similar to the prior year. The bank balance is now \$8,800. The budget was approved unanimously.
5. **Library:** Andy Scott announced that members have donated several new books. A list of the books will be printed in the next *Spoonbill*.
6. **Membership:** Margret Simmons encouraged everyone to sign in. We must have at least 50 members at each meeting in order to meet at the Bayland Center.
7. **Field Trips:** Adam Wood reported on numerous past field trips. The spring quarterly West Texas trip from May 10-13, 2007 was very successful. Sixteen people participated and 107 species were seen. The May 19, 2007 kayaking trip to Drum Island in Galveston Bay was enjoyed by 11 people. The weather was excellent and many birds were seen at the rookery. The best bird of the day was a frigatebird flying overhead. Due to its popularity, another kayaking trip will be planned for 2009. Steve Gross led a trip to the Jones State Forest on May 26; four people arrived very early to search for Chuck-will's-Widows with 18 more joining a little later. Thirty-nine species were seen. The Southeast Arizona trip had 14 participants and was fantastic. All of the Arizona specialties were seen. Some of the highlights were Gambel's, Scaled, and Montezuma Quail, Zone-tailed Hawk, Northern Pgy my Owl, 2 Spotted Owls, Elegant Trogon and Red-Faced Warbler.
8. **Upcoming Quarterly Trip:** Adam Wood plans to piggyback on the Rockport Hummingbird Festival from September 13—16, 2007.
9. **Midweek Trips:** Skip Almoney announced that there will be no trip in September. There may be a trip in October, none in November, and the trips will probably resume after that.
10. **Houston Audubon Classes:** Nature photography classes will be on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Edith Moore Sanctuary. Additional information is on their website.
11. **Future Programs:** Pam Smolen announced that all programs for the year are finalized. Karen McBride will present the February 2008 program on Australia.
12. **Program:** Cin-Ty Lee, professor at Rice University, gave an excellent presentation on Shorebird Migration on the Upper Texas Coast. The migration is very predictable with occasional unpredictability, which only makes it more interesting. He showed slides of many types of Plovers and Sandpipers, as well as Whimbrels, Godwits, Willets, Dowitchers, and Phalaropes. He emphasized that identification should rest more on general impression rather than feather color. Additional information can be obtained on the website: www.natura-aviflora.com.
13. **Meeting adjourned** at 8:40 p.m.

--Cindy Douglass

Monthly Field Trip: Smith Point Hawk Watch, September 22, 2007

This month's trip is our annual Hawk Watch trip to Smith Point. The trip leader will be John Arvin of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory; one of the senior Hawk Watch counters and organizers. There are few who know how to identify raptors on the wing better than John Arvin. If you are looking to really learn how to identify raptors on the wing from up close and afar, this is the trip for you. It doesn't matter if you are a beginner or a seasoned birder—John Arvin and the other Hawk Watch counters are very knowledgeable and are willing to answer whatever questions you may have about raptor identification. This is when raptor migration peaks, so throughout the day there should be lots of raptors soaring by. However, if by some chance it is not a good day for raptor migration, we will spend time in the woods near the tower looking for migrant songbirds. So come and join us for a day of looking up -- not at the stars but at "kettles" of hawks soaring overhead. It should be a memorable experience.

Meet at the hawk watch tower at Smith Point at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, September 22, 2007.

From Houston, take I-10 east to exit 812. (Coming from the east on I-10, take exit 813.) Turn south on Highway 61, go to the 4-way stop, where the road becomes FM 562. Follow FM 562 until a fork (Y) in the road, and go right at the Y. After approximately 14 miles you will arrive in the small village of Smith Point. Continue straight towards the bay and follow the black and white Hawk Watch signs, turning left to reach the tower. It will take approximately 1½ hour to 2 hours to get there from Houston, so I suggest leaving around 6:30 a.m.

Make sure to bring binoculars, a hat, sunscreen, raingear (in case it rains, but we will bird rain or shine), water, and snacks if you would like (there is a gas station nearby with a food mart).

Beginning Birder/New Member Trip I: Cullinan Park -- September 30, 2007

***Please note that this is a Sunday, not a Saturday.**

Are you a beginning birder? Are you interested in finding out more about OG before joining our regular monthly trips? If so, then this trip is for you. Join me for a leisurely day of birding in Cullinan Park, where you will have the opportunity to improve your birding skills in a low-pressure environment where we will not be worried about the number of birds we see, or finding target birds. I have been birding for 15 years, and have been birding the Upper Texas Coast and surrounding counties intensively since 2004. I have been a member of the Houston Ornithology Group for the past three years and am currently serving my second term as Field Trip Coordinator. I am largely a self-taught birder. So come on out to Cullinan Park ready to meet new people and to ask questions and learn more about birding and the birding community.

We will meet in the parking lot near the boardwalk at Cullinan Park at 8:00 a.m. The park is located on the west side of TX 6, north of US 90, in Sugarland. We will bird for as long as the group wishes, and I will be willing to stay as late as the last person to make sure that everybody sees most of what they want to see and gets all their questions asked.

Be sure to bring binoculars, hat, sunscreen, water, snacks, a camp chair (we may be staying in one spot for quite some time at points during the trip), camera, and a lunch (if you plan on birding in the afternoon).

~ Adam Wood, OG Field Trip Coordinator

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713-515-1692

September 13-16, 2007 OG Quarterly Trip
Hummer/Bird Celebration in Rockport-Fulton, and
Blucher Park and Hazel Bazemore, Corpus Christi

For this year's fall quarterly trip we are going to be doing something a little bit different. In an effort to help promote the wonderful birding festivals in Texas, I am encouraging everybody to think about attending the Hummer/Bird Celebration in the Rockport-Fulton area, Thursday through Sunday, September 13-16. The celebration's main purpose is to celebrate the migration of hundreds of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds through the central Texas coast. If you are a lover of hummingbirds this is the festival for you. Besides the common Ruby-throated Hummingbird, other species -- including Black-chinned, Broad-tailed, Buff-bellied and Rufous Hummingbirds -- get seen during each festival, and the rarer Anna's, Allen's and Calliope Hummingbirds are seen during some of the festivals. In all, it is possible to see up to eight different species of hummingbirds on the hummer bus tours. Boat tours and tours of the Fennessey Ranch are also offered during the festival for those who would like the chance to look for migrant passerines and shorebirds as well as see all the hummingbirds. This is a great festival, and I encourage everybody to go. Since the festival is not being organized specifically for the Ornithology Group, you do not have to sign up with me to attend, and you will have to make your own hotel arrangements.

I will be leading all those from the OG who are interested to Blucher Park and Hazel Bazemore in Corpus Christi to look for migrant songbirds and raptors on Saturday morning. If time permits we may even try and bird Paradise Pond and the Leona Belle Turnbull Birding Center, two of Port Aransas's best migrant traps on our way back to the Convention Center. **We will depart at 6:00 a.m., Saturday, September 15, from the convention center parking lot,** and will be back before 2 p.m. so those who have signed up for an afternoon bus or boat tour will be able to make it on those trips. I am scheduled to go on a 5:00 p.m. bus tour, so if nobody has any activities scheduled until then, I will be willing to stay out longer. If you are a member of the OG and are interested in taking this trip, please let me know. I am going to limit this trip to 12 people.

Directions: consult the website for the Hummer/Bird Celebration at rockporthummingbird.com for the location of the convention center and a map of the surrounding area.

Be sure to bring: Binoculars, hat, sunscreen, water, spotting scope, camera, snacks, rain gear in case it rains, and a lunch if you plan on joining me on Saturday morning.

~ Adam Wood, OG Field Trip Coordinator, 713-515-1692
birdsondabrain@earthlink.net

A Swift Night Out -- September 4

*Presented by Houston Audubon
Society and Nature Discovery Center*

Join us at the Pershing Middle School parking lot Tuesday evening, September 4, for a special Swift Awareness Event! Swift counts will be held at both Pershing Middle School and the nearby Whole Foods Market. Pershing Middle School is on Stella Link just south of Bellaire Blvd. The Whole Foods parking lot is about a block from Pershing. It takes 2-3 minutes to drive between the 2 locations. Waiting at the stop light takes most of the time when driving between the 2 locations. Co-sponsors are the Houston Audubon Society and the Nature Discovery Center.

The students at Pershing Middle School are being given a special invitation to join us at the counts. Volunteers are needed both to help count swifts and to assist with the general public. If you can help, please contact Mary Anne Weber, HAS Education Coordinator, or Mary Ann Beauchemin, Senior Naturalist at the Nature Discovery Center.

Swift Night Out is a nationwide event to help promote awareness of swifts. It is held annually in late summer, and is sponsored by Driftwood Wildlife Association. The procedure is very simple: find a large roost of Chimney Swifts and estimate the numbers that enter it in the evening. Dates for 2007 are August 10-12 and September 7-9.

For more information and to see a map of last year's results, visit the Swift Night Out webpage,

<http://www.concentric.net/~dwa/page56.html>

Field Trip Report -- Southeast Arizona with Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, July 22-29, 2007

[Because of space limitations, only a portion of Adam's detailed report is printed here; please see the OG website for the complete version. -Editor]

This was truly a great trip led by two great leaders, Brennan Mulrooney of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, and Steve Gross. Fourteen participants went on this trip: ten from the OG, with David and Sandy Junkin joining us from New York, and Joe and Jane Hanfman joined us from Maryland. Since this trip was during the start of the monsoon season, it did rain every single day of the trip, but the weather only forced us to cut our birding time short in two areas and it did not cost us opportunities to see any of the Arizona specialties.

The first few days of the trip were spent birding in the Tucson Valley, Madera Canyon in the Santa Rita Mountains and in the valley between the Santa Ritas and the Huachucas. Highlights included on the first afternoon of the trip finding a female Costa's Hummingbird at the Arizona-Senora Desert Museum. Day two found us picking up a Black-capped Gnatcatcher along Proctor Road and hearing a Flame-colored Tanager, which I believe a few of the participants got a glimpse of near Madera Kubo, both bonus birds that are not seen every year. While looking for the tanager we found a Dusky-capped Flycatcher and a couple of Painted Redstarts. On the way back to the vans, while watching Broad-billed Hummingbirds and Bridled Titmice visit the feeders at Madera Kubo, we found a pair of Arizona Woodpeckers foraging in the Amphitheatre Parking Lot.

Day three had us seeing the absolutely splendid Violet-crowned Hummingbird, as well as Broad-billed Hummingbirds, at the Paton house. At the Patagonia Roadside Rest Stop, made famous by a nesting pair of Rose-throated Becards that had been discovered there several years ago, we spotted a Thick-billed Kingbird. A pair of Peregrine Falcons flew by and perched on the rocks near the top of the bluffs, and we all got great scope views of the birds.

The next two days found us birding in the Huachuca Mountains, visiting places like Fort Huachuca, Garden Canyon, Ramsey Canyon, Miller Canyon, Carr Canyon and Ash Canyon. This part of the trip provided our best success with finding hummingbirds, and we were lucky to see two Spotted Owls just above the upper picnic area in Garden Canyon. A male

Elegant Trogon granted us absolutely spectacular looks while it was giving its Atari-video-game-like croak. At Fort Huachuca a male Montezuma Quail gave us brief looks at it before briskly walking into the tall grass.

The fifth day we spent driving up Carr Canyon to the Reef Townsite campsite. On our way up we paused to clean up after some careless campers who had left a smoldering campfire. For our good deed we were rewarded with good looks at a pair of Buff-breasted Flycatchers and a mixed-species flock that included one young male Olive Warbler, a female Hermit Warbler and a female Grace's Warbler. After a picnic lunch, the afternoon's drive to Portal got us our best look at a soaring Zone-tailed Hawk, and a flock of Yellow-headed Blackbirds at the Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Plant.

The last days of the trip were spent birding in the incomparable Chiricahua Mountains, visiting Cave Creek Canyon, Pinnery Canyon and Rustler Park. I think the vistas actually beat out the birds as the highlight of the Chiricahuas.

The big highlight for the morning on day six was having a Northern Pygmy-Owl calling back after we stopped playback of a Pygmy-Owl recording. It came right in and perched directly above us, affording us great looks and causing some participants to get "owl neck." We also were able to locate a few Mexican Chickadees in Pinnery Canyon, and we made it to Rustler Park before the big rains hit but had very little time to bird.

We still needed to find Red-faced Warbler, and our last chance would be at Turkey Creek below Onion Saddle. We were lucky enough to find a family group and got to watch as the male and female Red-faced Warblers fed the juvenile and then foraged for more food for it. We must have watched them for nearly an hour. We were amazed by how red the face of a Red-faced Warbler is; the general consensus was that the color could be called Poinsettia Red. This bird was voted Bird of the Trip in a poll taken over dinner that night.

The final day of the trip had us doing some birding in Rodeo, New Mexico, looking for Bendire's Thrasher before breakfast. It was a windy and cold morning. The rest of the day was spent driving back to Tucson with a stop at Lake Cochise in Wilcox for shorebirds.

In all, 184 species were observed during the trip, including 12 species of hummingbirds with 10 species in one day in the Huachucas. Even aside from the birds, southeast Arizona is one of the most gorgeous places in the United States. A huge thanks to Steve Gross for suggesting this trip and being willing to help

lead it, and a big thank you to Victor Emanuel for allowing Steve to be the second guide. Finally, a big thanks to Brennan Mulrooney for doing a fabulous job leading this trip. I hope everybody enjoyed the trip as much as I did. --Adam Wood

Books Donated to the OG

Mike Gremillion, a former member of the OG, has donated 31 books to the OG Library. The list of books is shown below. Most of these books were printed in the 1970s and 1980s, so they are somewhat dated. Newer books may have been printed that discuss these areas. Nevertheless, they are interesting and I will bring some of them to the next OG meeting. If you have a specific interest in one of these books, please email me at akscott1@ix.netcom.com and I will be certain to include that in my selection. --Andy Scott, Librarian

TITLE	AUTHOR (S)	DATE PRINTED	TYPE OF BOOK
All Color Book of Birds	Crescent Books - (Elementary)		Hardback
All the Birds of North America (Field Guide)	American Bird Conservancy	1997	Paperback
Beyond the Bird Feeder	Dennis, John	1981	Hardback
A Birder's Guide to Florida	Holt, Harold - Lane's Guide	1989	Paperback
Birder's Guide to France		1989	Paperback
Birder's Guide to Texas	Kutac, Edward	1989	Paperback
Birder's Guide to the Rio Grande Valley of Texas	Lane, James	1978	Paperback
A Birder's Guide to the Texas Coast	Lane, Hames & Tveten, John	1988	Paperback
A Birder's Guide to the Texas Coast	Holt, Harold - Lane/ABA Birdfinding Guide	1993	Spiral Bound
Birder's Handbook, The (A Companion to Your Identification Guide)	Ehrich, Paul - Dobkin, David - Wheye, Darryl	1988	Paperback
Birds of North America	Kaufman, Kenn - Kaufman Focus Guides	2000	Paperback
Birds of Prey of the World	Hosking, Eric and David with Flegg, Jim	1987	Hardback
The Birds of Texas	Tveten, John	1993	Paperback
Birds of Trinidad and Tobago	French, Richard	1980	Paperback
Birds of Trinidad and Tobago (Concise Edition)	French, Richard	1986	Paperback
Birdwatcher's Book of Lists (Eastern Region) - checklist	Short, Dr. Lester - Am. Museum Nat. Hist.	1987	Spiral Bound
Finding Birds in the National Capital Area	Wilds, Clandic - Smithsonian Inst. Press	1992	Paperback
Guide to Bird Behavior, A (Vol. 1, 2, 3)	Stokes, Donald - Stokes Nature Guides	1979, 1985, 1989	Paperback
A Guide to Hawk Watching in North America	Heintzelman, Donald	1985	Paperback
Guide to the Behavior of Common Birds	Stokes, Donald	1979	Hardback
Guidebook to the Aransas Wildlife Refuge	McAlister, Wayne & Martha	1987	Paperback
Hawks, Eagles & Falcons of North America	Johnsgard, Paul	1990	Hardback
Master Guide to Birding (3 Book box)	Audubon Society, John Farrand Jr. - Editor	1985	Paperback
Mexican Birds (Field Guide)	Peterson, Roger Tory - Peterson Field Guides	1973	Hardback
North Atlantic Shorebirds	Chandler, Richard	1989	Hardback
On Watching Birds	Kilham, Lawrence	1988	Paperback
Roger Tory Peterson's Dozen Birding Spots	Harrison, George	1976	Paperback
San Francisco Peninsula Birdwatching	Sequoia Audubon Society	1985	Paperback
Season at the Point (The Birds and Birders of Cape May)	Connor, Jack	1991	Paperback
Song and Garden Birds of North America	National Geographic Society	1964	Hardback
Songbirds - All the World's Animals Series	Torstar Books - (Elementary)	1985	Hardback
Spring in Washington	Halle, Louis	1957	Hardback
Virginia's Birdlife, an Annotated Checklist	Virginia Society of Ornithology	1987	Paperback

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The Spoonbill Wants Your Help...

Stories, notes, trip reports, or other materials for future issues are always welcome. Send to the Editor at

og_spoonbill@earthlink.net

TO START OR RENEW A MEMBERSHIP:

Name: _____

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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.

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Houston TX 77277-0894

Membership questions? Contact Margret Simmons
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