

# The Spoonbill

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

November 2008 Vol. 57 No. 9

Monthly Meeting: Monday, November 3

Bayland Community Center 6400 Bissonnet, Houston

Learning Corner -- 6:30 p.m.

presented by Steve Gross

7:00 p.m. - General Meeting

Program: Wildlife Rehabilitation

Margaret Pickell is the Operations Manager at the Wildlife Rehab & Education Wildlife Center in Houston, Texas. She has been a state and federally permitted wildlife rehabilitator for 23 years. Margaret specializes in birds with an emphasis on waterbirds, songbirds and raptors. She has been a certified Texas Master Naturalist for eight years. Margaret has also been on the WR&E Oiled Wildlife Response Team for over 18 years. This team responds to spills in the Gulf Coast area, aiding impacted wildlife. For the past twenty years, Margaret has combined her respect for wildlife with her passion for teaching children to educate thousands of children about co-existing with wildlife.

Please join us in November when Margaret and her wildlife ambassador share their efforts at bird and wildlife rehabilitation

#### Other Events

Nov. 15: Lake Texana State Park

Dec. 1: OG Meeting

(Dr. Andrew Kastner, IBAs)

Dec. 20: Houston Christmas Bird Count

Jan. 5: OG Meeting (Galapagos)

Jan. 17: Brazos Bend

Jan. 22-25: Matagorda Island, Fennessey Ranch, Choke Canyon

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## Is volunteering a thing of the past?

Month before last I asked your opinion on whether or not the Ornithology Group should take on a volunteer project. Evidently the answer is a resounding "no". Only one person, other than board members, even commented one way or the other. I hope that will change before long. The nice thing is that the one person who offered an opinion was positive in her response and would be willing to help with Hooks Woods workdays. Are there silent others willing to help? Probably not, so at this time, OG will not "adopt" Hooks Woods.

One nice volunteer is Patsy Lawrence ably handling refreshments for the meetings. Please call or speak to her at a meeting and offer to help with that. We have a small amount of income from refreshment donations in the budget. That's probably not going to happen if some of you don't volunteer to take a turn bringing treats.

Declining membership is still a concern. The organization needs a membership development person - someone willing to make all the arrangements for a booth at various nature events in the area. GCBO has a hummingbird celebration at which we've had a booth in the past. At this time there is no one to either set up or staff the booth during the event. Last spring at Galveston's Featherfest the display was set up but no one from OG invited visitors into the booth or the organization. Cypress Creek Nature Trail had a Nature Fest on September 27 and 28. It's too bad that Ornithology Group wasn't a presence there. Will we have a presence at Featherfest next spring? (Probably the same persons who helped with field trips this year will help next year but no one will be sitting with the booth.)

That's essentially what I wrote before IKE. Now there is an even greater need for volunteers...every sanctuary and birding hot

# **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.

713-782-7889 Chair: Bernice Hotman 832-212-1368 Vice-Chair: Pam Smolen Secretary: Cindy Douglass 713-644-4803 Treasurer: Jerry Stanislav 936-271-7772 Clearing House: David Sarkozi 713-412-4409 281-879-8668 Library: Deborah Valdez Membership: Margret Simmons 713-776-2511 Field Trips: Adam Wood 713-515-1692 Learning Corner: Steve Gross

The Spoonbill: Al Shultz 281-829-0970

Email: og spoonbill@earthlink.net
OG website: http://www.ornithologygroup.org/
ONC website: http://www.outdoornatureclub.org/

spot along the upper Texas coast was impacted by the storm and needs volunteers to help with the clean up. The Houston Audubon website has work dates posted. For Hooks Woods, contact David Poteet (listed in your OG directory; phone 281-492-2659). I'm not sure about the wildlife refuges but most have "friends" organizations that you could contact. Please help with recovery as you are able.

The areas where you shine through are your continuing to volunteer to be a member of this organization, to attend meetings and field trips, and to help with the Christmas Bird Counts. Some of you are even listing your birds on e-bird. I certainly don't take any of that for granted. And, I certainly have a wonderful, responsive, capable board with which to work – volunteers, every one!

--Bernice Hotman, OG Chairperson

## Minutes of Meeting on Monday, October 6, 2008

Ornithology Group of the Houston Outdoor Nature Club Number of Attendees: 55

- 1. **Learning Corner**: David Marrack discussed the biology of birds, specifically embryo development.
- 2. **Fundraiser Raffle**: Bernice Hotman announced that a John O'Neill print, "Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and Rattlebox" would be raffled off at the December meeting. Tickets are \$5 each or 5 for \$20. The print was at the meeting for viewing. Raffle tickets are in *The Spoonbill*.
- 3. **OG shirts available**: Two men's 2X long-sleeve shirts are still available for purchase for \$30 each.
- 4. **Sightings**: Bernice Hotman opened the meeting at 7:00pm with a request for sightings. Some of the sightings in the area were Wilson's Warbler in an Atascocita yard, Brown Thrasher at Russ Pittman Park, 2 Canada Warblers at Kleb Woods, 3,000 Broad-winged Hawks in Katy, a first-time Chickadee in Bernice Hotman's yard, a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Canada Warbler in the Memorial area, a Roseate Spoonbill in the Bastrop area, Brown Pelicans on the Houston Ship Channel, and a Lincoln Sparrow, Upland Sandpiper, and Claycolored Sparrow on the Katy Prairie. Many reported an unusually large number of female Ruby-throated Hummingbirds for this time of year, perhaps due to Hurricane Ike.
- 5. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**: Minutes from the September 8 meeting were approved with no corrections or additions.
- 6. **Treasurer's Report**: Jerry Stanislav reported that we are right on budget.
- 7. **Membership**: Margret Simmons reported that there are extra copies of the yearbook available.
- 8. **Library Report**: In Debbie Valdez's absence, Bernice asked that any members returning books give them to her. Also, thanks went to Bill and Jean Harwell who brought many books to the meeting which they were giving away to anyone interested.

- 9. **Brazos Bend State Park:** Bill Godley announced that the park would reopen on Friday, October 10, after a massive clean-up effort by many volunteers after Hurricane Ike. The next bird hike will be Friday, October 24.
- 10. **Field Trips**: In Adam Wood's absence, Bernice Hotman reported that all field trip details were in the latest *Spoonbill*. Adam will be back for the Beginning Birder Trip to the Katy Prairie on Saturday, October 11.
- 11. **High Island Cleanup**: Houston Audubon is sponsoring a clean-up at High Island after Hurricane Ike. The next two clean-ups are scheduled for October 25 and November 15. Please let them know if you are coming.
- 12. **Program**: Pam Smolen introduced Steve Matherly, who has coordinated operations at the North American Rare Bird Alert (NARBA) since 1995. NARBA started in 1985 and initially relied on the phone tree to alert people of rare birds. This method often proved ineffective because it reached birders after the bird had moved on. NARBA's website, www.narba.org, was first started in 1997 and was a dramatic improvement over the telephone The website was significantly improved in August 2007 and has a vast amount of information. NARBA now alerts members by e-mail notification. This method has improved the ability of NARBA to alert birders of rare birds in a timely manner. Identifying rare birds has become easier over the years with 1) improved field guides, 2) improved optics, 3) digital cameras, and 4) internet bird photos. NARBA now has approximately 300 subscribers. The subscription is \$35 per year or \$20 per year for the Texas rare bird alert and is used to help support Houston Audubon's extensive refuge system on the Upper Texas Coast.

-- Cindy Douglass, OG Secretary

# Monthly Trip Announcement: Lake Texana State Park November 15, 2008 Meet at Lavaca/Navidad Estuary Observation Deck, 8:00 a.m. Admission Fee: \$3

The park was acquired by a 50-year lease agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation / Lavaca-Navidad River Authority in 1977 and was opened in September 1981. The park is located in the flat Gulf Coast Vegetational Region, on Lake Texana, a reservoir on the Navidad River, which covers 11,000 surface acres, with approximately 125 miles of shoreline. The park itself comprises 575 acres of mixed oak and pecan woodlands associated with the Navidad River and has two miles of accessible waterfront. White-tailed deer, squirrels, rabbits, armadillos, and raccoons are numerous. There are occasional sightings of bobcats and wild turkeys. Alligators are also found in the park.

We will start the morning off by birding one of the best estuaries on the Central Texas Coast, looking for marsh birds such as some of our wintering dabbling ducks, our resident egrets and herons, as well as for the secretive American Bittern, Virginia Rail and King Rail. We will then proceed to Palmetto Bend Dam were we will look for wintering Bald Eagles and diving ducks. Then we will spend the rest of our time birding the State Park. This should be a great trip and the weather is usually very nice this time of year. So come out and join us for a nice late fall day of birding around Lake Texana, where we may have the chance for a rare gull or grebe (Western Grebes have been seen around Lake Texana).

**Directions:** The Lavaca/Navidad Estuary Observation Deck is located on FM 616 south of Lake Texana. To get there take US 59 South from Houston to FM 1593 just east of Lake Texana. Take the FM 1593 exit and proceed left (south) on FM 1593 to FM 616 and take a right (west) on FM 616 for about 7-8 miles to the parking lot for the Lavaca/Navidad Estuary observation deck.

**Be sure to bring**: binoculars, a hat, sunscreen, scope, camera, raingear (in case it rains, we will bird rain or shine), water and snacks if you would like.

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

Winter Quarterly Trip Announcement:

Matagorda Island/Fennessey Ranch/Choke Canyon
January 22-25, 2009

Days Inn – Rockport Lobby, January 22 @ 7:00 PM
Trip Fee: approximately \$379
Limit: 15 People

This is going to be a great trip. We will start out by taking a boat out of Rockport to Matagorda Island on Friday morning. The fee for the boat(s) will be about \$100 per person. We will be spending the whole day on the island with a USFWS guide who will be explaining to us the natural history of the island as well as taking us into areas where we should have fairly close encounters with the endangered Whooping Cranes and Aplomado Falcons. Those two birds will be the focus of our time on the island, but we should encounter other good shorebirds, waterfowl and gulls while studying those birds. The island is only

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accessible for birding and educational events, so this is an opportunity that you will not want to miss.

The next day we will spend on a full-day tour of the Fennessey Ranch, a private ranch near Bayside, Texas, north of Rockport. The Fennessey Ranch supports a great diversity of birdlife due to its array of habitats (inland marsh, riparian woodland, coastal grassland and thorn scrub). We will be visiting all the various habitats that the ranch has to offer, looking for wintering passerines (especially sparrows) as well as wintering waterfowl. Least Grebes and even Masked Ducks have been seen on the ranch in recent years. Visitation is by prior arrangement so this is a unique opportunity to bird a very diverse piece of private land. It will cost **\$84 per person** for the full day private tour of the ranch.

We will spend the final morning of the trip birding Choke Canyon before heading back to Houston. At Choke Canyon we will be birding in yet another different habitat (mesquite and dry chaparral) looking for more western species like Lark Bunting, Verdin, Common Pauraque, Black-throated Sparrow, Grove-billed Ani and Audubon's Oriole. If we are lucky we could encounter a Sage Thrasher. They have been known to turn up in the park in the winters.

This is a very special trip with some special opportunities to learn about the endangered Whooping Cranes and Aplomado Falcons, while observing them from a close distance as well as visiting some pieces of land that are not open to the public that contain a variety of habitats where the potential for seeing a large diversity of birds and even a few rare ones is pretty good. The bird list for this trip should be pretty impressive and we should encounter a rarity or two.

If you are interested in this trip, please let me know and I will get you more details on trip fees and how to reserve your room at the Days Inn. Remember, this trip is limited to 15 people.

**Accommodations & Directions:** We will be staying at the Days Inn in Rockport. I have booked 5 single rooms (\$59 a night) and 4 doubles (\$65 a night). If you are interested in this trip please let me know and I will give you the details on how to call in a reserve your room. To get to the Days Inn take US 59 South from Houston towards Victoria and just before Victoria exit onto US 77 south towards Corpus Christi. You will be on US 77 for about 14 miles to TX 239. Turn left on TX 239 and go on for about 11 miles to where SH 35 joins TX 239. Take a right onto TX 239/SH 35 and stay on this road for about 30 miles until you see it turn into SH 35 BR S. Stay straight to get on SH 35 BR S. East Laurel Street will be about 3 miles ahead and the hotel is right there.

**Be sure to bring**: binoculars, a hat, sunscreen, scope, camera, raingear (in case it rains, we will bird rain or shine), water and snacks if you would like. You will need to bring a lunch for Friday because we will be on Matagorda Island all day and there are no places to pick up a lunch on the island. Saturday lunch will be provided to us by the Fennessey Ranch, but you can bring your own lunch if you prefer.

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

## Clearing House - September 2008

by David Sarkozi david@sarkozi.net 713-412-4409

This is a summary of bird reported to eBird.org. Unusual birds are in bold. Location detail on unusual birds is in the following format: Location[County]:#,date or Location[County]:date. There were 162 species reported for the Upper Texas Coast (Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, and Jefferson Counties) for September 2008 from 152 checklists.

September 2008 will always be marked by the passage of Hurricane Ike. We really don't know yet what observable effect this will have on the UTC bird populations. I remember watching a hummingbird at first light, while the wind was still gusting to 50 mph at my office, gleaning insects sheltered in the lee of the building. Blue Jays were immediately evident on the University of Houston Campus when I ventured out.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck reports=30 total= Fulvous Whistling-Duck reports=3 total= 21 Wood Duck reports=4 total= 29 Mottled Duck reports=8 total= 24 Blue-winged Teal reports=10 total= 129 Pied-billed Grebe reports=17 total= 56 American White Pelican reports=4 total= 39 Brown Pelican reports=20 total= 195 Neotropic Cormorant reports=28 total= 162 Double-crested Cormorant reports=13 total= 16 Anhinga reports=10 total= 9 Magnificent Frigatebird reports=4 total= 5 American Bittern reports=2 total= 2 Least Bittern reports=4 total= 2 Great Blue Heron reports=42 total= 20 Great Egret reports=69 total= 107 Snowy Egret reports=52 total= 153 Little Blue Heron reports=35 total= 32 Tricolored Heron reports=31 total= 21 Reddish Egret reports=6 total= 6 Cattle Egret reports=40 total= 380

White lbis reports=37 total= 186
Glossy lbis reports=1 total= 4 Anahuac
NWR(Chambers)[10]:4

Black-crowned Night-Heron reports=9 total= 13

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron reports=22 total= 27

Green Heron reports=14 total= 14

White-faced Ibis reports=7 total= 236 Roseate Spoonbill reports=18 total=78 Wood Stork reports=3 total= 3 Black Vulture reports=22 total= 302 Turkey Vulture reports=29 total= 119 Osprey reports=9 total= 7 Swallow-tailed Kite reports=1 total= 1 White-tailed Kite reports=8 total= 7 Mississippi Kite reports=1 total= 1 Northern Harrier reports=1 total= 1 Cooper's Hawk reports=4 total= 1 Red-shouldered Hawk reports=18 total= 13 Broad-winged Hawk reports=3 total= 1 Swainson's Hawk reports=3 total= 3 White-tailed Hawk reports=1 total= 1 Red-tailed Hawk reports=14 total= 9 Crested Caracara reports=7 total= 10 American Kestrel reports=2 total= 2 Clapper Rail reports=3 total= 4 King Rail reports=1 total= 1 Purple Gallinule reports=1 total= 1 Common Moorhen reports=10 total= 33 American Coot reports=8 total= 27 Black-bellied Plover reports=8 total= 9 Snowy Plover reports=1 total= 1 Semipalmated Plover reports=3 total= 5

Piping Plover reports=5 total= 16

Killdeer reports=44 total= 98

American Oystercatcher reports=2 total= 3 Black-necked Stilt reports=20 total= 63 American Avocet reports=1 total= 8 Spotted Sandpiper reports=9 total= 9 Solitary Sandpiper reports=4 total= 7 Greater Yellowlegs reports=17 total= 16 Willet reports=13 total= 15 Lesser Yellowlegs reports=17 total= 72 Whimbrel reports=1 total= 1 Dos Vacas Muertas(Galveston)[5]:1 Long-billed Curlew reports=5 total= 5 Marbled Godwit reports=3 total= 23 Ruddy Turnstone reports=6 total= 22 Sanderling reports=7 total= 44 Semipalmated Sandpiper reports=2 total= 0 Western Sandpiper reports=5 total= 18 Least Sandpiper reports=18 total= 223 Pectoral Sandpiper reports=5 total= 14 Dunlin reports=1 total= 2 Anahuac NWR(Chambers)[10]:2 Stilt Sandpiper reports=1 total= 6 Short-billed Dowitcher reports=2 total= 3 Long-billed Dowitcher reports=4 total= 4

Short-billed Dowitcher reports=2 total= 3
Long-billed Dowitcher reports=4 total= 4
Wilson's Snipe reports=1 total= 1
Laughing Gull reports=40 total= 475
Ring-billed Gull reports=5 total= 10
Least Tern reports=5 total= 25
Caspian Tern reports=6 total= 11
Black Tern reports=6 total= 11
Black Tern reports=10 total= 14
Royal Tern reports=17 total= 102
Sandwich Tern reports=4 total= 6
Black Skimmer reports=3 total= 412
Rock Pigeon reports=18 total= 160
Eurasian Collared-Dove reports=17 total= 86
White-winged Dove reports=31 total= 132
Mourning Dove reports=65 total= 300
Inca Dove reports=6 total= 1

Common Ground-Dove reports=1 total= 2 Brazoria NWR(Brazoria)[18]:2 Monk Parakeet reports=1 total= 3 Houston(Harris)[3]:3

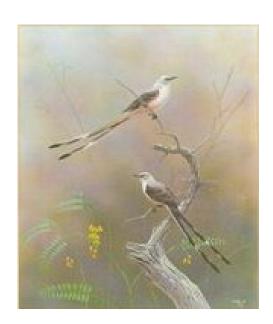
Eastern Screech-Owl reports=1 total= 2
Great Horned Owl reports=1 total= 1
Barred Owl reports=3 total= 3
Common Nighthawk reports=7 total= 8
Chuck-will's-widow reports=1 total= 1
Chimney Swift reports=20 total= 106
Ruby-throated Hummingbird reports=51 total= 56
Belted Kingfisher reports=12 total= 8
Red-headed Woodpecker reports=6 total= 5
Red-bellied Woodpecker reports=55 total= 17
Downy Woodpecker reports=61 total= 18
Pileated Woodpecker reports=8 total= 10
Eastern Wood-Pewee reports=8 total= 4
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher reports=2 total= 1

Acadian Flycatcher reports=2 total= 2 Least Flycatcher reports=2 total= 1 Empidonax sp. reports=5 total= 4 Eastern Phoebe reports=5 total= 3 Armand Bayou NC(Harris)[6]:2; Fulbrook(Fort Bend)[7]:1; Willow Waterhole(Harris)[7]:1; Jesse Jones Park(Harris):[27]:X; Eldridge Retention Basin(Harris)[30]:1 Great Crested Flycatcher reports=9 total= 7 Western Kingbird reports=1 total= 1 Eastern Kingbird reports=13 total= 16 Scissor-tailed Flycatcher reports=15 total= 43 Loggerhead Shrike reports=44 total= 16 White-eyed Vireo reports=17 total= 23 Red-eyed Vireo reports=2 total= 1 Blue Jay reports=83 total= 54 American Crow reports=42 total= 43 Purple Martin reports=1 total= 5 Tree Swallow reports=4 total= 31 Bank Swallow reports=4 total= 37 Cliff Swallow reports=4 total= 21 Cave Swallow reports=1 total= 20 Barn Swallow reports=15 total= 59 Carolina Chickadee reports=52 total= 40 Tufted Titmouse reports=18 total= 15 Carolina Wren reports=56 total= 29 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher reports=31 total= 31 Eastern Bluebird reports=4 total= 12 American Robin reports=3 total= 9 Gray Catbird reports=3 total= 2 Northern Mockingbird reports=91 total= 44 European Starling reports=37 total= 179 Tennessee Warbler reports=1 total= 1 Nashville Warbler reports=2 total= 3 Northern Parula reports=2 total= 2 Yellow Warbler reports=7 total= 6 Pine Warbler reports=7 total= 1 Black-and-white Warbler reports=5 total= 4 Northern Waterthrush reports=2 total= 2 Common Yellowthroat reports=4 total= 4 Hooded Warbler reports=1 total= 1 Wilson's Warbler reports=4 total= 8 Canada Warbler reports=3 total= 3 Yellow-breasted Chat reports=4 total= 2 Summer Tanager reports=2 total= 2 Lark Sparrow reports=1 total= 1 Seaside Sparrow reports=1 total= 3 Northern Cardinal reports=76 total= 59 Blue Grosbeak reports=3 total= 2 Indigo Bunting reports=5 total= 3 Red-winged Blackbird reports=6 total= 1,021 Eastern Meadowlark reports=11 total= 15 Common Grackle reports=15 total= 349 Boat-tailed Grackle reports=4 total= 40 Great-tailed Grackle reports=30 total= 206

Brown-headed Cowbird reports=9 total= 373

# OG Programs, 2008 – 2009

Date	Speaker	Topic
Aug. 4	Bob Rasa	Uvalde County Birding
Sep. 8	Mark Klym	TPWD Plan
Oct. 6	Steve Matherly	NARBA
Nov. 3	Margaret Pickell & Wildlife Ambassadors	Wildlife Rehabilitation
Dec. 1	Dr Andrew Kasner	IBA's
Jan. 5	John Old / Skip Almoney	Galapagos
Feb. 2	Lynn Barber	ABA Big Year
Mar. 2	John Arvin	
Apr. 6	Ian Campbell	Madagascar
May 4	Kelly Bryan	Big Bend



# There's Still Time: A Chance to Own a Spectacular Print

Gwen Kunz, a longtime OG member, has very generously donated a print by John O'Neill to the OG, which we are pleased to offer by raffle. Tickets will be sold at \$5 each or 5 for \$20 from now until the December meeting, when the winning ticket will be chosen by drawing. You need not be present to win! Money from ticket sales will go toward OG speakers and programs.

"Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and Rattlebox" measures 20 x 24 inches and is a 1973 limited-edition color print, signed by the artist and framed. (The artist also added a personal inscription to Gwen.) Bring cash or checks (made out to OG) and tickets to the next OG meeting, or mail to Jerry Stanislav, OG Treasurer, 23 Paddington Court, Conroe, TX 77384

Raffle Ticket Name:	(\$5 each – 5 for \$20)
Telephone:	
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Telephone:	

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Raffle Ticket Name:	(\$5 each – 5 for \$20)
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Outdoor Nature Club
Ornithology Group
P.O. Box 270894
Houston TX 77277-0894

# The Spoonbill Wants Your Help...

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

og\_spoonbill@earthlink.net

**Field Trip Photo Gallery** is now posted on the OG website. Have a look at photos from recent trips...and consider sharing your photos, too. Birds, birders, and places are all suitable.

http://www.ornithologygroup.org/ mgxroot/page 10742.html

\$ 34.00

#### TO START OR RENEW A MEMBERSHIP:

Name:		
Address:		
Telephone:		
E-Mail:		
	Individual	Family
ONC Annual Dues:	\$ 8.00	\$ 15.00
OG Annual Dues:	\$ 14.00	\$ 19.00

Additional contributions are welcome in any amount.

Total:

Send to:

Outdoor Nature Club PO Box 270894 Houston TX 77277-0894

\$ 22.00

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

#### Discount for Electronic Spoonbill

Members who do not wish to receive a printed copy of *The Spoonbill* can save \$4 off their dues:

	Individual	Family
ONC	\$ 8.00	\$ 15.00
OG	\$ 10.00	\$ 15.00
Total	\$ 18.00	\$ 30.00

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