

Monthly Meeting October 7, 2013

Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet St, Houston, TX

6:30 pm [Learning Corner](#): What about the Parrots? By Candy McNamee

7:00 pm [Ornithology Group](#) (OG) Business Meeting

7:30 pm [Program](#): Birding Central and Southern Chile by Stephan Lorenz

Field Trip: October 6, 8 am – [El Franco Lee Park](#) led by Debbie Valdez
(beginning birder)

Field Trip: October 12, 8:30 am – [Palmetto State Park](#) led by Debbie Valdez

[Editor | Deer Park Prairie | Cerulean Warbler | Meadowlark](#)

From the Editor

I've started my new role as Editor of the *Spoonbill* with this issue. Vickie Sims prepared the August and September issues, as I was backpacking (and doing a little birding) in the California Sierra Nevada Mountains. I want to thank Vickie for being an enthusiastic editor for the past two years plus and hope that I will come close to doing the great job that she has done.

This will be a work in progress as I get a final format developed and make each issue as accessible as possible. I have included contents links (blue underlined words) at the top of the issue that will take you to each article. To go back to these links and access the contents, click [↑top↑](#) at the end of each article. I am also pasting this issue into the first of the two email messages that I am sending to announce the issue. The second message will contain only the link to the PDF file located on the web server. In tests at home the issue was rendered exactly in the email, with the links intact. So, if this works via the global mail server, you should be able to read the issue within your mail.

I will replace the file on the web server with one containing the latest information. So you may want to click on the email link or link from the 2013 *Spoonbill* page on the web to open the PDF for the latest updates.

What about the Parrots?

By Candy McNamee

A brief look at parrots in nature and captivity.

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From Cincloides to Penguins: Birding Central and Southern Chile

By Stephan Lorenz

While Chile does not boast the hyperdiversity of birds found in many tropical South American countries, it makes up for it with unique endemics and many specialties. From one-of-a-kind tapaculos, through a plethora of waterfowl, and a variety of shorebirds, a trip to central and southern Chile will not disappoint. It's endemic chasing at its finest, against backdrops of snowy volcanoes, primordial southern beech forests, and windswept tundra. Not surprisingly, the cold Humboldt Current sweeping past Chile's 2,700 mile coastline hosts large number of seabirds, from huge albatross to tiny storm-petrels. Due to the unusual geography of Chile, 2,600 miles in length and average 110 miles width, a visit requires quite a bit of travel to cover the country, but efficient and cost effective internal flights make for an enjoyable trip. Join this photographic tour from the balmy Chilean Matorral around Santiago, to the gray bays of Chiloe, through the icy headlands of Tierra del Fuego. This presentation will focus on traveling and birding in central and southern Chile, highlighting the hotspots, giving detailed information on endemics and specialties, and touching briefly on logistics.

Stephan Lorenz has travelled and birded in every corner of North America from the Aleutians to the Dry Tortugas, from Newfoundland to Baja, and south to the Darien. He has also spent considerable time in South America, South Africa, Australia, Malaysia, and Europe. He has published over thirty articles on natural history, bird identification, and travel. When not traveling or birding, he teaches biology at San Jacinto College. He recently spent three months guiding in the Brazilian Amazon. [↑top↑](#)



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El Franco Lee Park Field Trip (October 6, 8:00 am)

This is a beginning birder's field trip. Here's the link to the map of the location: <http://mapq.st/1f3DQS8>. Take South Sam Houston Parkway (Beltway 8), exit on Hall Road (between Blackhawk and Pearland Parkway) and take 1st right into the park. Go past the community center building on your left turn right going past a parking lot on your left until you get to the end of the road (a blue port-a-can is there). We'll meet in the gazebo (to the left of the port-a-can) at 8 am. Bring mosquito repellent, water, sun screen, and a hat. We'll explore for a few hours. Everyone is welcome, although the trip is intended to help beginners. Please email me at debvaldez66@gmail.com if you plan to go. [↑top↑](#)

Palmetto State Park Field Trip (October 12, 8:30 am)

Details are forthcoming on www.ornithologygroup.net. Since this state park is a good 2 to 2.5 hours west of Houston, please email me (debvaldez66@gmail.com) if you are interested in going. You may want to share a ride, and some people may want to spend the night. Plan to meet at 8:30 at the park headquarters, where we will consolidate vehicles. Bring a lunch and plenty of water. [↑top↑](#)

Deer Park Prairie Saved with the Help of OG and ONC Contributions

By Larry Dybala

A 53-acre native prairie located amid new housing developments and next to a school has been saved. A grass-roots campaign that included donations from more than 1000 donors, most of whom had never seen the prairie, raised the \$4 million needed to purchase it from the owner. Our Ornithology Group (OG) members helped by voting to give \$1000 and our Outdoor Nature Club (ONC) contributed \$2000 at Monday's September OG meeting. The Bayou Land Conservancy, who sponsored the fund-raising campaign, met their goal the next day.

This is a remnant of the tall grass prairies that once dominated coastal Texas and Louisiana, less than 1 percent of which survives today. Very few of these are pristine and even fewer are in urban areas.

The Bayou Land Conservancy will donate the land to the Native Prairies of Texas. This group will manage the prairie and provide access to the public. They will also file for a conservation easement which will prevent the land from ever being developed. [↑top↑](#)

Remembering the Cerulean Warbler in West Virginia

By JoAnn Raine

My birding began after my children were off to college and I could have the free time to walk in the woods. Luckily, my husband's parents lived along the Greenbriar River in the mountain

state. We spent summer two weeks in Lewisburg and I could wander the state parks looking for birds.

Cerulean warblers are tree top nest builders and there is an early spring window when the trees are just beginning to leaf out when they come down lower and gather material for the nests. Since their very favorite tree is the Giant Poplar (Cottonwood in the West), along the river is where you will see these conditions. The Blackwater Falls State Park is great for the wood warblers that travel from the wintering grounds in Central America up the Appalachian Mountains to 3,000-4,000 foot nesting elevations. Mid-May to mid-June is the breeding season.

You can find the Eastern population of Swainson's Warbler and the darkest shade of Black-Throated Blue here. But the endangered Cerulean Warbler is the bird that all birders come to see at the festival held here along the New River Gorge.

These best days watching the breeding activity of this pale blue warbler cause me to hope that the mining and forestry interests in West Virginia will save their habitat. Nature activities are income producing for the residents of the small towns. Always wear your binoculars when you patronize these shops and restaurants. [↑top↑](#)



Lemon Larks

By JoAnn Raine

Not to be missed each May are the Meadowlarks. Texas has lots of places to see them as they love wet meadows and grasslands. My favorite (easy to access place) to find the showy bird is Attwater Conservation area outside of Sealy, Texas. Slowly driving the road at 7 AM will surely permit you to hear the lovely song from the grasslands.

I would venture that the song of the Meadowlark is one that you can hear from a car at 60 mph. It carries a long way. The Eastern lark sings a longer, multipart song and the Western a shorter less melodic song. When singing from a fencepost, the simple beauty of the Eastern Meadowlark slows your senses. It is unmistakable with its bright yellow neck and breast with the characteristic black V. But if he flies off into the grass and turns his back to you, he disappears.

The ID of the two species is always a challenge. I pretty much stick to the idea that the Eastern bird (on the right) is brighter in yellow and darker on the back. He was made to sing in meadows in the East. The Western Meadowlark is more drab and the back is pale. He was blending in with the drier grassland and prairie.



Now the ornithologists are presenting birders in the Western states like Texas with the third Meadowlark called Lilian's. What would you look for? This is a really pale meadowlark. The cheek pattern is white and it has the most white in the tail of any Meadowlark. In fact the tail appears nearly all white. This is truly a Meadowlark of West Texas and New Mexico. [↑top↑](#)

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

ONC website: <http://www.outdoornatureclub.org/> [↑top↑](#)