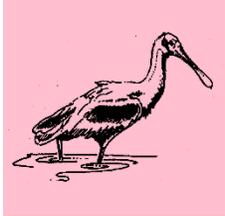


## Monthly Meeting August 1, 2016

**Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet St, Houston, TX**



6:30 pm Learning Corner: If you have been away this summer, share with us your birding experiences. Rare birds seen? Concentrations of species?

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

7:30 pm [Program](#): Bird-a-Day Challenge by Nina Rach

[Field Trip](#): No field trip scheduled for August. September, October, and November field trips planned

[Purple Martins in Houston](#) | [Minutes of May 2 Meeting](#)

## Bird-a-Day Challenge

by Nina Rach

For the August OG program, I will review my efforts and strategies in **2012** (366 days), **2013** (253 days), **2015** (365 days), and **2016** (200 days so far!) to complete the Bird-a-Day challenge. It's an excellent endeavor to keep you focused through a full birding year.

The Bird-a-Day challenge is to see how many days in a row you can see/hear a different species to add to your personal list. The birdaday.net website, run by Trey Mitchell (Miami, Florida), helps you track your efforts, and allows you to share how you are doing with others as they do the same. There are birders participating from the US, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, and Africa. Two other local birders have also tried this– Sue Heath (2008 champ) and Tad Finnell (2009 champ).

### The Rules (honed over the years, published by Trey Mitchell)

1. Every day you add a new bird that you see or hear (not on the television, in a book or on the internet) to your list of birds for that date. You don't have to enter your observation each day, but in a timely manner post your observations for the rest of us to see.
2. You may not repeat the same bird or skip a day. (Although there is nothing stopping you from doing so, off the website. Tom Wetmore – Massachusetts birder who started this on Plum Island - continues through the end of the year even after he misses a day; to see how many days he can record a different species.)
3. Any non-caged, non-captive, free flying bird is allowed; that is except for a chicken. We're not sure why chickens aren't allowed, but we accept the rule and live by it!
4. We operate by the honor system, just like any other bird list, it is your own. The competition is more with yourself than with others. Unless you live next door to someone who is participating, there is really no way make circumstances equal.

5. When your time to end is near do your best and consider what you can do to improve next year. Don't break the bank flying around the country chasing the next bird.... that is unless you own the bank.
6. Encourage others who are participating and keep others up to date about the great birds you will ultimately find throughout the year
7. **Have Fun! Enjoy getting outside and watching the birds.**

At some point during the year, you will be unable to see or hear a new bird to add to your list. When this happens, you have completed the race and have established for yourself a mark to try and better next year.

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## **Field Trips:**

### **Sunday, September 18**

#### **Texas City Dike and Marathon Land Farm and Ponds in Texas City.**

This field trip takes us to the Marathon Land Farm and ponds which is not open to the public. We will be guided by Allen Hardee, the Security Supervisor of Marathon Galveston Bay Refinery. Allen Hardee will meet us at the entrance gate and guide us around the ponds. After we tour the ponds and take our photos, we will bird the Dike and surrounding areas. We will meet at 7:30 at the entrance of Texas City Dike and then set up our carpools and caravan to the Dike. Bring your walkie-talkies, bug spray and sunscreen and snacks and lunch.

### **Saturday, October 8**

#### **Brazos Bend State Park**

This is a good time to get our Fall Migrants and we all love Brazos Bend. We will meet by the Restrooms at the 40 Acre Lake parking lot just past the entrance of the park. We will be walking most of the time. Bring your bug spray, sunscreen and snacks and lunch.

### **Saturday, November 19**

#### **Matagorda County Hot Spots**

Target sites to visit are W South Texas Project (STP) and area fish farms, duck ponds and STP wetlands. Target birds include, waterfowl including loons and grebes, shorebirds and maybe sparrows, Bald Eagles and Peregrines. This will be a full day trip starting at 8 AM. We will be guided by Bob Friedrichs who lives in Palacios and is an active bird guide. Bob grew up in Victoria, Texas and started birding at the age of 13. He left Texas for his career, and moved back in 2005. He is very active in the CBC in the Central Texas Coast, including Mad Island Marsh and Matagorda County. He birds his local area weekly and knows all the special places on the roads less traveled. We look forward to having a day with Bob. This field trip will be limited to 20.

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## Celebrating 50 Years of Housing for Purple Martins in Houston

by Bill Goloby

Fifty years ago the City of Houston was donated a 24-compartment purple martin trio castle by the Gulf Coast Horticultural Society in 1966 (see photos). Martins were quite popular back then when they were being hailed as the ultimate natural mosquito control with a proclamation issued for the celebration of “Purple Martin Time”. “Purple Martinis” were served at the local bars.



*The Gulf Coast Horticultural Society presented a purple martin castle to the City of Houston on the occasion of the first Purple Martin Time celebration in 1966. Mayor Louie Welch accepted the castle from Mrs. M. A. Bradburn, conservation chairman of the society; and Mrs. C. J. Steinbach, president of the society.*

Twenty-three years ago, that house was replaced with a new one donated by the Ornithology Group of the Outdoor Nature Club (see photo).

When the new house was put up, I volunteered to clean out the compartments on an annual basis for several years. As the house is mounted on the top of a 3-inch, 20-foot tall steel pipe mounted in concrete, this involved coordination with the City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department to get the house down and then back up again, using a “cherry picker” truck. There was always the worry that once down and cleaned, would the Parks Department get it back up in time for the martins? Several years ago, I got very busy, so there was a 5-year lapse in cleaning



### Purple Martin Time

The PURPLE MARTIN is the largest and most beautiful bird of the swallow family. It is clean, graceful in flight, sings beautifully and a welcome sight in the Houston area.

The PURPLE MARTIN returns every spring to the Houston area to nest exclusively in manmade birdhouses placed for them by concerned citizens.

The PURPLE MARTIN feeds almost entirely on flying insects and is an excellent means of natural insect control.

The City of Houston encourages widespread interest in this most popular bird, the PURPLE MARTIN.

Therefore, I, Robert C. Lanier, Mayor of the City of Houston, hereby proclaim the week of March 1 through March 7, 1993, as

### Purple Martin Time

in Houston, Texas and urge citizens to observe nature's return of spring and the PURPLE MARTIN.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and have caused the Official Seal of the City of Houston to be affixed this 25th day of February, 1993, A.D.

*Bob Lanier*  
Mayor of the City of Houston



Houston Chronicle Wednesday, March 3, 1993



Betty Tichich / Chronicle

## A birdhouse in hand . . .

Bill Goloby and Bob Honig of the Outdoor Nature Club Tuesday present Mayor Bob Lanier with an aluminum Purple Martin birdhouse at City Hall.

The multilevel birdcastle will be put in Hermann Park Friday to replace the city's old house for the swallows that return to Houston each spring.

close to the house. I could see that when they grew up, they might impede the martins from coming to the house. I contacted the Friends of Hermann Park and they graciously arranged to have those trees moved further from the house to accommodate the martins. More recently, there have been renovations of that whole area, converting that space and the adjacent parking lot into a landscaped area called McGovern Centennial Gardens. In that process, it appears that the house has been relocated to a slightly different location from where it had been for years. I was concerned that the new location would prove unfavorable to the martins. I don't know if the house was cleaned before being put back up.

the house. When I finally did get to clean it, it was surprising to see that the compartments were not that badly soiled. Martins using this house tend to make a nice neat carpeting of pine needles from the nearby pine trees for the flooring of the compartment. These make a neat nest for the eggs, with minimal buildup over time. It has now been several years again since I've had a chance to clean the house, but the colony is obviously doing just fine (see photos).

Some years ago, I noticed two young oak trees planted too



On March 18, 2016, I decided to check up on the colony and see if it even still existed. To my very pleasant surprise, not only does it exist, but it is thriving (see photos and video). Surprisingly, nearly every compartment is being used by martins. There is no evidence of any house sparrows or starlings in any of them. This is truly amazing and a real treat to see at the official City of Houston Purple Martin House.

Ornithology Group members should feel proud of their donation to the City of Houston and may want to consider a new house again.

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## **Minutes of May 2 Meeting**

**By Jean Greenhalgh**

The OG monthly meeting was held on Monday, May 2 at 6:30 and 35 people attended.

The Learning Corner –Jean Greenhalgh presented Birding Coastal South America – Cape Horn the easy way. While travelling from Peru to Argentina on a 3,000 passenger cruise ship there are opportunities to bird at the ports of call and to see amazing scenery. The ships excursions give opportunities to see National Parks and birding sites. Also trips to the local countryside can lead to seeing more birds than you would expect. She gave a brief description of Paracas National Reserve in Peru – with Chilean Flamingos, Blackish Oystercatchers, Peruvian Boobies, Inca Terns and Ruddy Turnstones (they are everywhere!). Then on to Chile for volcanoes and glaciers and the Beagle Channel, named for the ship on which Charles Darwin sailed on his famous voyage.

In Argentina, a stop at Ushuaia had a boat trip to rocky islets for cormorants, gulls and elephant seals. While a trip inland to Tierra del Fuego National Park yielded Black-necked Swan, Crested and Spectacled Ducks among others. Then a smooth passage around Cape Horn. Next was a frustrating time looking at the Falkland Islands, with their five penguin species, but being unable to land due to high winds. Then on to Puerto Madryn for 150,000 Magellenic Penguins and regional endemics. Disembarkation was at Buenos Aires with easy birding at Reserva Ecológica Costanera Sur in the city, as well as Rock Pigeons, Rufous-collared Sparrows and Monk Parakeets roaming city parks.

Nina Rach opened the meeting by asking for members sightings during migration, to which many people contributed.

The OG Field Trips. The next trip is on May 7<sup>th</sup> is to Sabine Woods, a Texas Ornithological Society bird *sanctuary*. This is an area of large oaks on a chenier ridge, a few miles west of Sabine Pass.

Jean Booth emails details of field trips to all members. If you are not receiving emails, please let Jean know at [ljeanbooth@aol.com](mailto:ljeanbooth@aol.com)

The Texas Ornithology Society is holding its Spring meeting in Uvalde on May 6 – 8. The focus of the birding trips will be Golden Cheeked Warbler, Black Capped Vireo and other Edwards Plateau specialties. Registration is open, and details are on the TOS website <http://www.texasbirds.org/>

Joann Raine introduced the speaker, Greg Lavaty on : Why Warblers Make My Profession Exciting. Greg has been a professional photographer for many years and has had a special interest in warblers. He leads birding and photography trips in the US and Central America, with details at his website <http://www.texastargetbirds.com/>

When starting to photograph birds he started with the larger, easier birds but became interested with the smaller colorful little birds he saw - warblers. Although many migrated through Texas he soon wondered going where the birds were going. A trip to Tennessee where he saw 16 nesting warblers, helped him realize that they were easier to see on the breeding grounds where they were singing. This started a quest to see and photograph all the North American warblers. While he was accomplishing this, his interest expanded to their wintering grounds which, in turn, led to his interest in seeing warblers which didn't come as far north as the USA. He has been to Mexico and Costa Rica many times and has photographed many warblers in both countries.

Greg's photographs were superb and a special treat for all those attending. It opened a whole new realm of birding possibilities in Central America. He finished his talk with a show-stopping Pink-headed Warbler. To see what you may have missed, Cornell's website has 4 of his photos of this warbler on its website at [http://neotropical.birds.cornell.edu/portal/species/gallery?p\\_p\\_spp=574956](http://neotropical.birds.cornell.edu/portal/species/gallery?p_p_spp=574956)

The next Ornithology Group meeting will be held on Monday August 1st when Nina Rach will speak on Daily birding: Bird-a-Day big years.

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