

Monthly Meeting May 8, 2017

Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet St, Houston, TX



6:30 pm Learning Corner: Book Sale (most \$1 - \$5)

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

7:30 pm [Program](#): Birding in Cuba by Stephan Gast

Field Trips: No field trips this month.

No meetings or field trips in June and July; meetings resume in August.

[Powderhorn Ranch Field Trip Report | Looking for Love](#)

[2017 Dues are Due: http://ornithologygroup.org/Dues](http://ornithologygroup.org/Dues)

Birding in Cuba

by Stephan Gast

Steve Gast arrived in Houston in 1985 and has been an active supporter of Houston Audubon and the Katy Prairie Conservancy for the many years since then. He will share with us some perspectives on birding in Cuba where during his visit there, he surpassed seeing over half of the world's bird species.

Also Steve has received a few books from the estate of Jim Stewart that will be available for purchase. The proceeds from this sale will benefit the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, a favorite organization of Jim.

Here's a list of the books offered for sale:

\$1.00

High Island Blues A novel set in High Island - a birder murder mystery

Birds of the West Indies by James Bond

A Field Guide to Seabirds by Gerald Tuck

Birding in Venezuela by Goodwin

Finding Birds in Mexico 2nd edition by Edwards

Turtles - A Step by Step Book About

Wildlife Sanctuaries and the Audubon Society

Antbirds and Ovenbirds by Skutch

Life Histories of North American Birds by Bent

Gulls and Terns

Wagtails, Shrikes and Vireos

Diving Birds

Cuckoos, Goatsuckers, Hummingbirds and Their Allies

Gallinaceous Birds

Jays, Crows and Titmice

Thrushes, Kinglets and Allies

Marsh Birds

Flycatchers, Larks, Swallows and Allies

Nuthatches, Wrens, Thrashers and Allies

North American Birds of Prey, Vols 1 and 2

Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan - Vols. 1, 2, 6, 7, and 8

\$2.00

Butterflies through Binoculars

A Bird-finding Guide to Mexico by Steve Howell

Complete Checklist of Birds of the World by Howard and Moore

Birds of the Transpecos by Peterson

The High Frontier - Exploring the Tropical Rainforest Canopy by Moffett

\$5.00

Birds of Venezuela by Steven Hilty

Terns of Europe and North America by Olsen 2 copies

Robert's Birds of Southern Africa by Maclean

Birds of Kenya and Northern Tanzania by Zimmerman et al

Shrikes and Bush-Shrikes of the World by Harris

Pheasants, Partridges and Grouse of the World by Madge

Endemic Bird Areas of the World by Birdlife International

Birds of East Africa by Stevenson

\$10

The Birds of Ecuador - Vol 1 and 2 in slip-case - by Ridgely

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Trip Report for Powderhorn Ranch, April 21 and 22, 2017

by Jennifer Backo

Dan Walker, Project Leader for Powderhorn Wildlife Management Area, wanted to make sure all OG Members had a great experience at the Ranch and agreed to let us split up our group into 2 days. There were 11 OG members on the Friday field trip and 7 OG members on the Saturday field trip.

We met our Guide, Dan Walker, at dawn on Saturday morning to begin our adventure on Powderhorn Ranch. Dan gave us a history of the ranch and then told us about the plans for the ranch. We learned that TXPWD is currently working to restore the ranch to the original native prairie which will provide prime habitat for wildlife. The ranch is already prime habitat for Mottled Duck, Quail, Whooping Crane, and Aplomado Falcon. Powderhorn consists of 17,300 acres of prairie with many ephemeral wetlands that provide habitat for many species of

waterfowl and wading birds. The goal is for a large part of Powderhorn to become a State Park in 2018.



We were then ready to begin our tour which lasted almost seven hours. We stopped at many wetlands which had wading birds and a few Mottled Ducks, Blue-winged Teal, Black-bellied Whistling Ducks and one Red-breasted Merganser. We had no sooner begun our tour when we came on three Wild Turkeys, one of which was a displaying tom. Several times we found Northern Bobwhite calling and scurrying through the grass. The ranch has a large body of water called Powderhorn Lake that is actually an estuary with a tidal flow where we found two Reddish Egrets and a common Loon among the birds around the lake.

As the weather got warmer, we decided it was time for lunch and we headed for the ranch house. It is a beautiful, Spanish-style home surrounded by an expansive lawn and large Live Oaks

overlooking Lavaca Bay. The house is built of concrete and cedar and withstood Hurricane Carla in the 1960's. We sat on the porch and enjoyed the beautiful view overlooking the bay.



After lunch, we thought it was time to head through the oaks to drum up as many warblers and other passerines as possible. We didn't do too badly! The front was approaching and the winds were picking up. Our best find was a Golden-winged Warbler, but we also found Northern Parula, Yellow-throated Warbler, Black-throated Green, and Yellow-breasted Chat. Some other

nice birds around the trees were Warbling Vireo and Baltimore Oriole.



All in all, I can say that both trips were successful and, I believe, enjoyed by all. The Friday group had 79 species including one Bobolink and one Dickcissel. The Saturday group had 83 species of birds. Many thanks to our patient guide, Dan Walker, who is so knowledgeable about Powderhorn and its birds. Thanks also to Michelle Rometry who was in charge on Saturday and to Jean Booth for organizing the two trips.

A few OG Members that were on the Friday group stayed over Saturday and had the privilege to have Bob Friedrichs as our guide with a focus on the sod roads and rice r

fields. We were excited to get good looks at many of the migrating shore birds and grass pipers, including Pectoral, White-rumped, Baird's, Upland, Semipalmated and Buff-breasted Sandpipers, We also got good looks at Wilson's Phalarope, Gull-billed, Sandwich, and Least Terns, several Whimbrels, one Least Bittern and White-tailed Hawk and several Yellow-headed Blackbirds, and a Bronzed Cowbird. We also went to Oyster Lake to look for hatched American Oystercatchers and found two. It was an exciting day and we want to thank Bob for his focus to help us get good looks at our migrating shorebirds. (Photos of group by Michelle Romey and of the birds by Kurt Hillman.)

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Looking For Love

By Hart Rufe (Reprinted with permission from the Hart Beat, first published March 1, 2017)

We humans love to attribute our human emotions and characteristics to birds and animals. It's called anthropomorphism. That's a big word, that in today's example, means that just as we humans spend a considerable amount of time and effort looking for love during our lifetimes, we sometimes get the opportunity to watch birds and animals go through the same give and take, push and pull, move forward, step back, feel excitement and emotions grow and subsequently ebb, as they also look for love.

On one such occasion, at Viera, a pair of Great Blue Herons went through one such exquisite performance for us, to which we were able to anthropomorphically provide our human thoughts and emotions to the very actions the herons were exhibiting.

We watched a Great Blue Heron male, with the bright blue "lores of love" climb upon a makeshift stage and begin to "dance" in obvious anticipation of attracting the attention of a comely female. (*photo 1*)





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After a short while, during which time “Handsome” stood on the stage, alternately throwing his head back and then bending low in a slow dance, “Gorgeous” finally arrived on the scene,

apparently attracted by “Handsome’s” gyrations. (*photo 2*)



While a considerable time passed as the two slowly maneuvered toward each other, just as a couple of teenagers might size each other up at a school dance, “Gorgeous” finally jumped up on the stage with “Handsome,” and you can just see her saying to him, “Okay, big boy, show me

what you've got." (photo 3)



At this point, “Handsome,” much like many a human male who misreads the signs and signals, immediately becomes excited, and thus emboldened, moves much too quickly, and impetuously goes way beyond what “Gorgeous” intended or expected, as he says to her, “Come on Baby, give

me a kiss.” (photo 4)



“Gorgeous” very quickly puts “Handsome” in his place, telling him. “Back off, big boy, I’m not that kind of girl.” (*photo 5*)



Now, as any human Don Juan can tell you, and any sweet young thing knows, she doesn’t really mean or expect him to back off too much, and he, only slightly deterred, will be determined to keep trying harder.

The dance continues back and forth on the stage for some time, until “Handsome” is finally emboldened to jump up on the same level of the stage occupied by “Gorgeous” and display all of

his glorious charms. (*photo 6*)



Obviously quite impressed, she does not back away, but has now reached the point where she is ready to accept his advances and seals the performance with a “kiss.” (*photo 7*)



The thrill, now over and gone, the couple parts ways, each heading in a different direction, “I’m out’a here.” (*photo 8*)



Watching this courtship display stirred long lost memories of high school dances where young males strutted while pretty young girls watched from across the dance floor. Gradually gravitating toward each other, the couple would begin moving closer until the young man would finally gather the courage to ask the young lady to dance.

Admittedly, those early encounters in high school seldom progressed as rapidly as the herons, moving quickly to kissing, pair bonding, nest building, egg laying, and chick raising. Of course, the heron’s time frame is much shorter, as they don’t have years to accomplish their perpetuation of the species as we humans do. While it was fun to anthropomorphically attribute all these human emotions and characteristics to the heron’s courtship and “kiss,” the reminiscing also stirred up long buried memories of less successful encounters and outright rejection.

But fortunately, rejection did not occur every time. Not for the herons, and not for me.

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