



**Monthly Meeting May 7, 2018**  
**Bayland Community Center**  
**6400 Bissonnet St, Houston, TX**

**6:30 pm Learning Corner: Local Birding Hotspots by Mark Kulstad**

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

**7:30 pm [Program](#): Bird Extinction and the Fate of Guam's Tropical Forest by Amy Dunham**

**Field Trips: [Waller County, May 12, 7am, led by John Berner](#)**

**[Letter from the Chair](#) | [Texas Hill Country Field Trip Report](#)  
[Galveston Featherfest 2018](#) | [Minutes of April 2, 2018 Meeting](#)**

**[Upcoming Texas Birding Events \(link to web page\)](#)**

**[Hart Beat: They're Not Kites! \(link to web page\)](#)**

**2018 Dues are Due: <http://ornithologygroup.org/Dues>**

Connie Blakley will be putting together a new Membership Directory booklet in July. If you have not yet paid your 2018 dues, please do so now to be included in the Directory.

## **Letter from the Chair**

We are about to host our final meeting of the 2017-2018 year and then take a summer hiatus for June and July. Birding slows down, but there are still plenty of opportunities to explore the area and see wonderful species through the summer. Remember that fall shorebird migration begins in mid-July.

I would like to **thank everyone** who has helped keep the OG running, especially behind the scene: Larry Dybala for diligently constructing The Spoonbill newsletter every month, Harlan Evans for shepherding OG finances, Michael Honel who tracks membership and brings his Apple laptop each month for digital projection options; Teresa Connell for putting together splendid field trips; Jean Greenhalgh for keeping minutes of our meetings, and Joann Raine for several years of speaker arrangements.

A dedicated group of people volunteer for the Outdoor Nature Club (ONC), under which the OG operates. Connie Blakley continues to serve as the Secretary and Treasurer. Calvin Blakley, Sergio and Wanda Henao, Charles Peterson, Charles Smith, David Wood, and others continue to work regularly at or on behalf of the ONC's Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary in San Jacinto County. If you have not yet visited the sanctuary, please check it out during one of the monthly open weekends!

What's coming up? Program planning for 2018-2019 monthly meetings, Field trip planning, considered purchase of a new digital projector (because of all the connection issues we have experienced), and efforts to increase outreach as the ONC approaches its centenary in 2023. As our green spaces in the city dwindle, the programs that the OG and ONC offer will become increasingly important to the growing population in the greater Houston area. The ONC and the OG are apparently well-kept secrets, though, and we need to get the word out to folks who would be thrilled to learn of our existence. Member participation is the lifeblood of any organization! We could use several people to step up as publicity/outreach volunteers, so that we can have a presence at various city-wide events and staff and information table. Please consider your talents and let me know if you can help for a few hours/month.

We were sad to recently lose a dedicated OG member: **Vicki Carol Sims**. She was a cheerful, lovely person, she did a beautiful job producing The Spoonbill newsletter for all of us to enjoy, and worked as an OR nurse at Texas Children's Hospital. Vicki passed away January 24, age 65, and a Celebration of Life service was held April 16 at Westbury Baptist Church.

<http://ornithologygroup.com//Spoonbill/VickiSims.pdf> and

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/abqjournal/obituary.aspx?n=vicki-sims&pid=188721238>

## Upcoming Programs:

Aug 6, Program: Kendra Kocab - using eBird (and other birding apps)

Sept 10, Program - David Sarkozi, Nemesis Birds in Texas

Oct 1, Program: Fred Collins & Bob Honig, Texas birding Historical Overview, Part 2

Nov 5, Program: Gary Clark, Birding Cuba

Dec 3, Kristine Rivers, Identifying Winter Waterfowl

News from **Quintana**: Many of us enjoy the great birding opportunities and wide beaches on Quintana Island in Brazoria County, despite the proximity of industry and almost constant construction. A bit of history: In 2005-2008, **Freeport LNG** built a liquefied natural gas (LNG) import and regasification facility NW of the Quintana Neotropic Sanctuary. Then the shale gas boom in Texas meant the company could export gas instead, and in 2010, Freeport LNG began its natural gas liquefaction and LNG export project. The construction spread over the seaward berm, previously a good sparrow spot, significantly increased the traffic, and changed the island ambience. The latest news is that Freeport LNG has postponed the start date of the LNG export terminal to Sept 2019. This is only the first train; the other two are scheduled to launch in Jan & May 2020. More info at <http://freeportlng.com>

Have a wonderful summer!

Nina Rach, OG Chair

[↑top↑](#)

## **Bird extinction and the Fate of Guam's Tropical forests**

**By Amy Dunham**

The invasive brown tree snake has wiped out virtually all birds on the tiny Pacific island of Guam. Dr. Dunham will discuss progress of a four year study to examine how the loss of bird life is impacting Guam's forest ecosystem. Without birds acting as gardeners of the forest, or as pollinators of many trees, how is the forest likely to change?



Bio:

Dr. Amy Dunham is an Associate Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology in the Department of Biosciences at Rice University. She is a tropical ecologist and her research focuses on the consequences of bird and mammal extinctions on rainforest ecosystems. Humans have had devastating impacts on the world's biodiversity through habitat destruction, overexploitation, invasive species and climate change. While the loss of animal species from ecosystems has been a consequence of these pressures, this 'defaunation' is also a component of global environmental change in its own right. Although we have made great progress understanding the drivers and patterns of species loss from ecosystems, we are just beginning to understand how species extinctions may, in turn, impact ecological communities and ecosystems. Dr. Dunham's research group has focused on the ecological impacts of birds and mammals as insectivores, seed-dispersers, and herbivores, and the consequences of their loss for tropical ecosystems. Her group's recent and current research projects on this topic are carried out in Madagascar, Gabon, Peru, and the Mariana Islands.

[↑top↑](#)

## Field Trip:

### Waller County Spring Trip, May 12, 7am

#### Led by John Berner (E-Bird Reviewer for Harris County)

Enjoy the final OG trip of the season on the Follmer Ranch. Reagan Follmer has graciously allowed us to bird on his properties on Clemons Switch Road. We will bird at our meeting place for about 45-60 minutes before consolidating cars and driving a short distance to the confluence of Irons Creek and the Brazos River. We finish around 11-11:30 am.

The meeting spot does not have an address, but can be located using Google Maps at coordinates: 29.8164, -96.019. Clemons Switch Road is west of Pattison, off FM 1458. The meeting place takes about 30 minutes west from I-10 and SH-6.

- 1) Go west to I-10 exit 732, TX359 north.
- 2) Follow signs for TX359 north as it winds through Brookshire for 4.6 miles north to Pattison, TX
- 3) Left on FM 1458 at stop sign
- 4) After 0.6 miles going east on FM 1458, Left turn on Clemons Switch Road.
- 5) 1.5 miles on Clemons Switch Road until you reach the destination a dirt driveway with gate on left and huge trees just before an oxbow crosses Clemons Switch Road

Assuming the gate is open, we will park near the large trees and oxbow along the dirt driveway to the SE. If the gate is closed, we will park near the gate along Clemons Switch Road.

Please arrive by 7:00 am. For those arriving (slightly) late, you should be able to catch up with the group. For those who wish to start earlier, John will be birding at sunrise (6:30am).

**Important:** There are NO bathroom facilities. Please use restrooms in Brookshire, near FM359 at I-10 (Flying J Truck Stop or other fast-food establishments). Lunch can be brought with you or eaten in Brookshire after the trip.

**RSVP:** Limited to 14 participants. Fieldtrip Coordinator Teresa Connell (505.280.7443, [teresacConnell@live.com](mailto:teresacConnell@live.com))

[↑top↑](#)

## Texas Hill Country Field Trip Report, April 5-6-7-8

By Nina Rach

Fifteen birders from Houston, Richmond, Pasadena, and Austin participated in this long weekend field trip which touched Kerr, Kimble, and Bandera Counties. We began on Thursday afternoon at Mo-Ranch, near Hunt, in Kerr County. After checking in, we met with Mo-Ranch facilities manager Mark Perhamus, and Mo-Ranch president Dick Powell to discuss birds on the ranch property. Mark took us to see the Great Blue Heron rookery trees, and we later watched many dozens of hummers at the Perhamus' home feeders. We saw about 50 bird species walking around Mo-Ranch and adjacent Kerr WMA, and the highlights (birds not seen often or at all in Houston) included several dozen Black-chinned Hummingbirds, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Woodhouse's Scrub Jays, Black-crested Titmouse, Canyon Wrens, Bewick's Wrens, Yellow-throated Warbler, Golden-cheeked Warbler, Spotted Towhee, Pine Siskin, and Lesser Goldfinch. A buffet dinner was available at the King Dining Hall at Mo-Ranch, as well as at Elaine's Table in Hunt.

On Friday morning, there was a riot of birdsong around main camp as we got coffee at the Mabee building and prepared to leave Mo-Ranch. We grabbed breakfast burritos at the Hunt Store before heading to meet our local guides (and former OG members) Paul and Deloris Sellin, at Heart of the Hills Fisheries Science Center, the #1 Kerr County eBird hot spot. We walked there for about three hours and saw more than 60 species, with the highlights being: Canada and Egyptian Goose, Cinnamon Teal, Zone-tailed Hawk, Sandpipers; Vermilion, Ash-throated, and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers; Yellow-throated Vireo and Yellow-throated Warbler, Clay-colored and Lark Sparrows, Summer Tanager and Orchard Orioles.

We then headed to lunch at Billy Gene's in Kerrville, where we held court on the water-front porch above the Guadalupe River and watched a few hummingbirds as we ate. After lunch, we bid farewell to Deloris Sellin and moved on to Flat Rock Lake with Paul, where we saw 24 species (BW Teal, Gadwall, Lesser Scaup, Belted Kingfisher), and then visited Ingram City Park, with 18 species (including Wood Ducks, Wigeon, Swamp Sparrow and Yellow-crowned Night-heron). Overall, we saw at least 85 species in Kerr County.

Finishing up about 4pm, we began our drive to Junction. We saw a couple groups of Wild Turkey along Hwy 41, especially at the entrance gates to the All Hat Ranch, near Mountain Home, just before we got to I-10. In Junction, we met up with a group of Harris-Galveston-Brazoria birders at Isaak's Restaurant on Main St. before settling in for the night.

On a cool, crisp, Saturday morning (April 7), we met our local guide, Rhandy Helton, at Isaak's for breakfast, and then headed to the Ralph Ingram Memorial Tennis Center, where we saw and heard Bell's Vireo, Western Kingbird, and Clay-colored Sparrows, among others. Then we went to the Junction Water Treatment Plant ponds (HOTW 090), where we spent a productive hour, despite the wind, perusing the ponds. There were Northern Shoveler, Gadwall, Ring-necked,

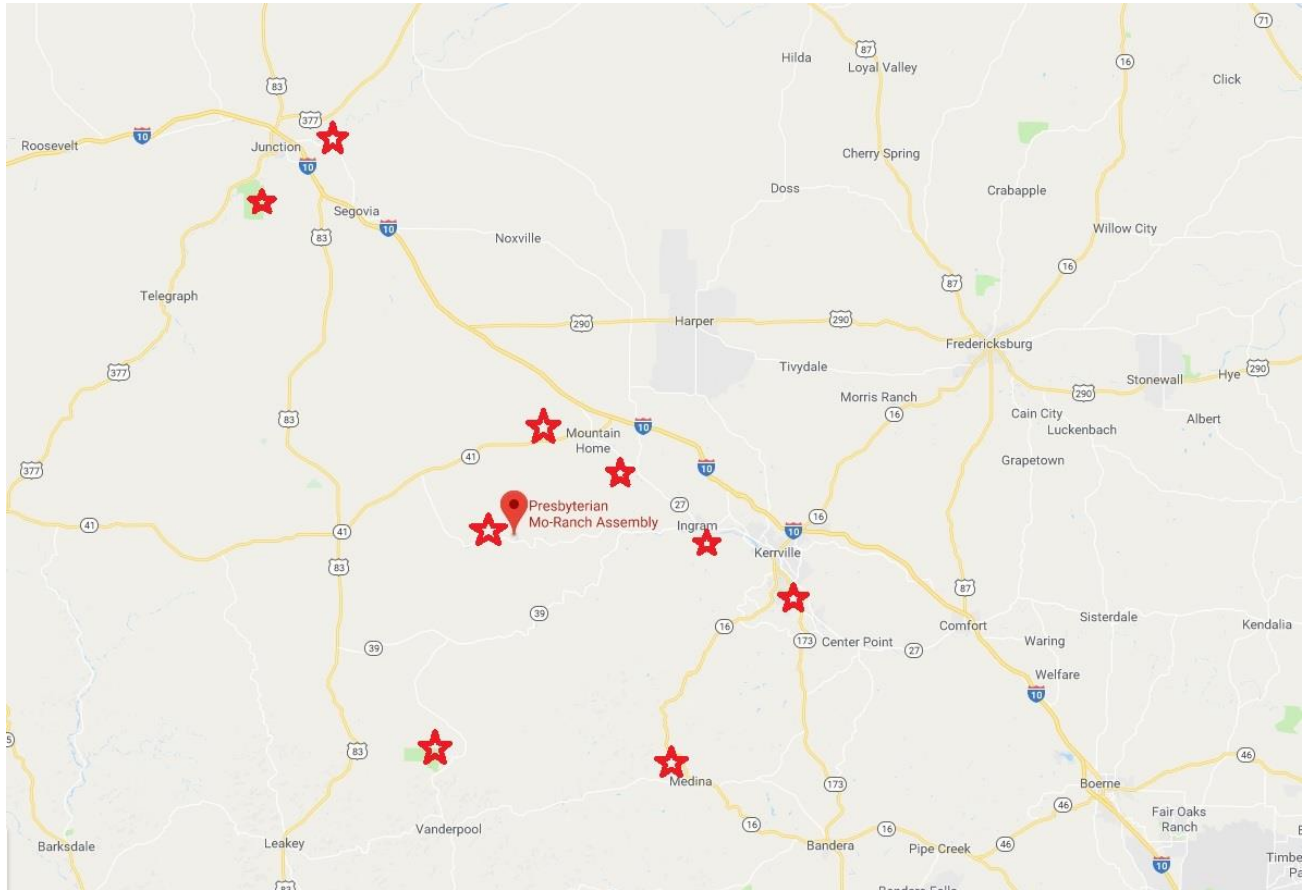
Lesser Scaup, Ruddy Ducks, and an Eared Grebe, along with Baird's and Solitary Sandpipers, several species of swallow, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

After the WTP, we went to South Llano River State Park (HOTW 093) for a few hours, where we walked and saw a porcupine and several dozen terrific birds, including seven Cassin's Finches. Then headed to a very late lunch at Lum's BBQ. After lunch, we went to Schreiner Park (HOTW 091) on the Llano River, to see a pair of Avocets, and then to Easter Pageant (Lover's Leap) Hill, where we saw and heard Black-capped Vireo, Bell's Vireo, Verdin, Black-throated Sparrow, Lark, and Rufous-crowned Sparrows. Then back to South Llano River State Park, where we added Canyon Towhee. Overall, 72 species in Kimble County for the day.

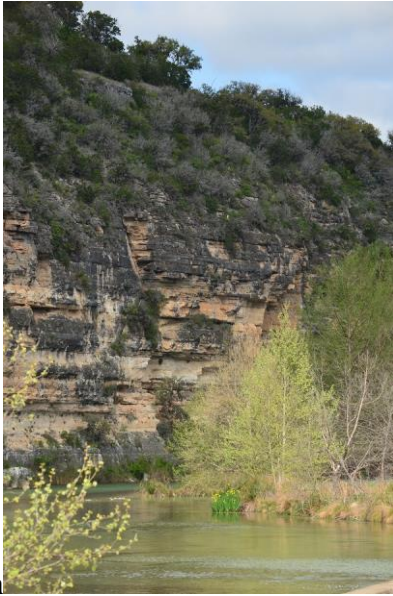
We stayed in Junction on Sat night, and left early Sunday, April 8, for Lost Maples State Natural Area (HOTW 061), eBird's #1 hot spot in Bandera County. We met local guide Richard Redmond at 8:30 am and began our half-day hike, during which we saw about 44 species. Highlights included several Golden-cheeked Warblers, White-tipped Dove, Broad-winged and Zone-tailed Hawks, Ash-throated and Brown-crested Flycatchers, five vireos (White-eyed, Bell's, Hutton's, Yellow-throated, Red-eyed); Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Common and Chihuahuan Ravens. Following the hike, many of us went to lunch at Love Creek Orchard's Apple Café in Medina, before continuing home on Sunday afternoon.

All-in-all, a very good trip, with mostly mild, pleasant days. For those nippy mornings, though, remember to bring and wear layers! Trip fees were nominal (\$15/day for members, \$20/day for non-members), but we still raised over \$400 for the bathroom renovation project at Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary in San Jacinto County. Yay!

Field trip map showing birding hot spots on the Hill Country field trip



View of the north fork of the Guadalupe River at Mo-Ranch; Yellow-throated Warbler at Mo-



Ranch



Pine Siskin on Perhamus' feeder at Mo-Ranch; Zone-tailed Hawk at the Heart of the Hills  
Fisheries Science Center



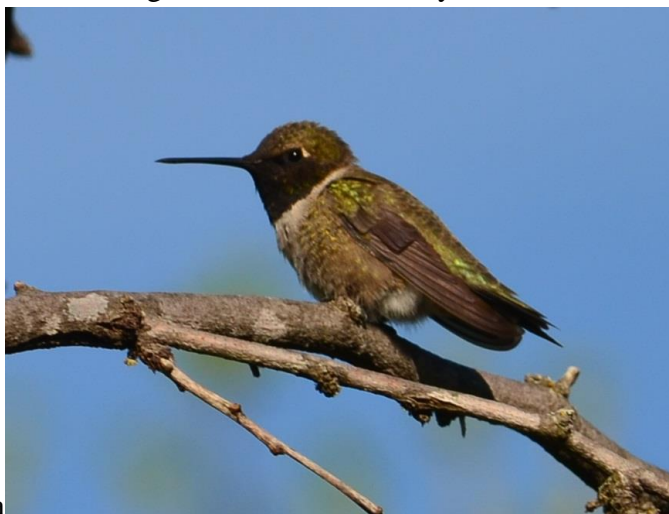
Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Junction WTP; Cassin's Finch at South Llano River State Park



Lark Sparrow at South Llano River State Park; view from Lover's Leap Hill, Junction



Black-chinned Hummingbird in Kimble County; Golden-cheeked Warbler at Lost Maples State



Natural Area



Richard Redmond guiding at Lost Maples SNA, Bandera County, Texas



[↑top↑](#)

## Galveston FeatherFest 2018

By Nina Rach

The 16<sup>th</sup> annual FeatherFest was held April 19-22, and the focus this year is on the Eskimo Curlew, *Numenius borealis* (ESCU), last seen on Galveston Island in 1962 (photographed by Don Blietz) and now presumed extinct. Todd McGrain's large bronze sculpture of this species will be installed mid-island in the near future. His movie, The Lost Bird Project, was screened at FeatherFest this year. The festival included more than 100 birding events: birding and nature photography field trips, workshops, kid-friendly events (FledglingFest!), turtle tours, and great evening events.

Galveston's location along a major migratory flyway brings many people from out of the area. This year, there were more than 600 registered attendees from four countries and more than 200 volunteers.

I volunteer each year as a field trip liaison, and this year, I participated in the Coast Birding Workshop and field trip on Thursday, April 19, led by Kristine Rivers (Pearland, [birdingforfun.com](http://birdingforfun.com)) and Laurissa Noack (Galveston, TAMUG). After Kristine's terrific intro lecture and a lunch break, our bus took us to the East End Lagoon Nature Preserve, Apfel Park, and Corps Woods. Highlights were the many terns and skimmers, Long-billed Curlews, Marbled Godwits, and various sandpipers, along with a few Indigo Buntings at Corps Woods.

On Friday, April 20, I worked as liaison for the Annual Galveston Big Day Birding Adventure, with Alice Anne O'Donnell and Dick Peake. Our party of ten birders started at Apfel Park along Seawall Blvd, worked our way through the East End Lagoon area, hit Corps Woods, Lafitte's Cove, Settegast Road, 8-mile/Sportsman's Road, and then checked Moody Gardens briefly before heading back with 116 species tallied! It was a relatively cool, breezy day, really good birding with many migrants. Passerines included Vireos (White-eyed, Blue-headed, Red-eyed); Warblers (Black-and-White, Tennessee, Hooded, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Yellow, Black-throated Green); Tanagers (Summer, Scarlet); Grosbeaks (Rose-breasted, Blue); Buntings (Indigo, Painted); and Orchard Orioles.

[Not having had quite enough, I headed home by way of Hwy 146 to pick up Monk Parakeet nests, visit McHale Park, Seabrook back-bay area, Hester Garden Park, Robinson Park, and the Houston Cruise Terminal area.]

Finally, on Sunday, April 22, I was liaison for the North Deer Island and Galveston Bay boat tour, a fun and fascinating, with four leaders: Sid Steffens, Dennis Jones, Gay York, and Kristine Rivers. We started birding the wharf area near the Galveston Historical Foundation's Texas Seaport Museum, before boarding the SS Seagull II at Pier 21 with Capt. Adam and 20 registered participants. North Deer Island is the largest natural island left in Galveston Bay, located off Tiki Island. It's co-owned by Houston Audubon and Audubon Texas and now protected as a bird sanctuary; the NDI rookery hosts 12-20,000 pairs of nesting birds of 17 species. After North

Deer Island, we toured Offats Bayou, following the Intracoastal Waterway, and saw many birds, dolphins, and two rare species: a White-winged Scoter and a huge Glaucous Gull that soared very close to our boat. Another highlight was seeing the pair of American Oystercatchers and other birds on the deteriorating concrete hull of the Selma. It was windy and cool, but we saw quite a lot of birds and a good time was had by all--even non-birders would enjoy this trip. After being out on the water, I headed to a terrific lunch at the nearby Happy Coffee Shop and then to Kempner Park for some extraordinarily good birding with Greg Miller (Ohio, "The Big Year") and a few OG members.

FeatherFest is now run by the Galveston Island Nature Tourism Council, which also hosts a Summer Social in July, the Holiday with the [Sandhill] Cranes event in December, Sea Turtle Saturday in February, and other winter Texans events through January and February. Be sure to try FeatherFest next year! [www.featherfest.com](http://www.featherfest.com)





Welcome sign inside headquarters at the Island Community Center, 4700 Broadway.



Black Skimmers and terns at the East End Lagoon Preserve.



Kristine Rivers showing off a Lightning Whelk, *Busycon perversum*, designated as the Texas state shell in 1987, during the Coastal Birding field trip on April 19.



Alice Anne O'Donnell at Lafitte's Cove



Children's art competition at FeatherFest 2018



“Boy with seagulls” bronze by Galveston sculptor David W. Moore at Gaido’s restaurant, Pier 21.



North Deer Island – Colonial Waterbird Nesting Site

[↑top↑](#)

## Minutes of April 2, 2018 Meeting

**By Jean Greenhalgh**

The April meeting of OG was held on April 2nd, 2018 at the Bayland Park Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet, at 6:30 pm. 30 people attended.

Mark Kulstad presented the Learning Corner by taking us on a photographic tour of Harris County Hotspots. This was the second part of a three part Learning Corner. In addition to photos, Mark listed some of the rarities which have been seen at each site though they may not have been seen recently. Katy Prairie. At Paul Rushing Park the ditches have had shorebirds and other rarities have included Western Kingbird, Yellow-headed Blackbird; Bobolink; ducks and sandpipers. Good location for nesting Cave Swallow and Brewers Blackbird.

Longenbaugh and Porter End Roads have Bewicks Wren (50 yards east of Bear Creek) and Common Ground Dove

Russ Pitman is good for migrants and a pair of resident Eastern Screech Owls.

The Rice University area has some good birds at various habitats. It has both prairie and live oak forest (at Sunset and Main). There is also a retention pond.

North and South Boulevards have a Yellow-crowned Night-heron rookery with over one hundred nests.

Mark distributed an ebird listing of the Top 25 Harris County Hotspots with current totals. In addition he handed out an updated list of Accidental, Very Rare or Rare Harris County Birds and a list of Uncommon to Rare Harris Co. Birds.

He will return for the May meeting to conclude his tour of hotspots.

Nina then chaired the general meeting.

The successful March Weekender to Cameron Parish, Louisiana, found 101 birds.

On 12<sup>th</sup> May John Berner will lead a day trip - :Birding Waller County.

Some of the notable birding events coming up include

May 3 – 6 TOS Spring meeting in Alpine

May 4 – 11 Biggest Week in Birding at Magee Marsh, Ohio

August the Annual Birding Conference of the AOS (formerly AOU) is being held in Vancouver BC.

For a complete list visit <http://ornithologygroup.org/Events/>

The main program One if by Land and Two if by Sea – Spring Migration on the Upper Texas Coast was presented by Brad Macurda featuring photos by both Brad and his wife, Noma. The photos were all taken on the Upper Texas Coast.

In spring northbound migrants either fly by land around the Gulf of Mexico, or fly the 600 miles from the Yucatan peninsular by sea across the Gulf

From east to west, there are many Upper Texas Coast hot spots for migrating birds. Adjacent to Louisiana are Sabine Woods, Sea Rim State Park and Texas Point NWR. Closer to Houston is High Island; Anahuac NWR and the Bolivar Peninsular. Bolivar includes Bolivar Flats, Frenchtown Road, Fort Travis and North Jetty at the end of 17<sup>th</sup> Street.

Galveston Island has multiple locations including East Beach, Corps Woods, 8 Mile and Sportsman Roads, Lafitte's Cove and Dos Vacas Muertas Sanctuary.

Further west are Brazoria and San Bernard NWRs, Quintana Neotropical Bird Sanctuary and Matagorda Mad Isle WMA.

[↑top↑](#)

## About the Ornithology Group

**Chair: Nina Rach | 281-433-0651 | [NRach@autrevie.com](mailto:NRach@autrevie.com)**

**Vice Chair (Programs): Volunteer needed**

**Secretary | Jean Greenhalgh | [JeanBrit01@yahoo.com](mailto:JeanBrit01@yahoo.com)**

**Treasurer: Harlan Evans | 713-797-6468 | [harlanj42@sbcglobal.net](mailto:harlanj42@sbcglobal.net)**

**Clearing House: David Sarkozi | 713-412-4409 | [david@sarkozi.net](mailto:david@sarkozi.net)**

**Library and Swifts: Pam Smolen | [pjsmolen@att.net](mailto:pjsmolen@att.net)**

**Membership: Michael Honel | 713-432-1985 | [michaelhonor@sbcglobal.net](mailto:michaelhonor@sbcglobal.net)**

**Field Trips: Teresa Connell | 505-280-7443 | [teresacconnell@live.com](mailto:teresacconnell@live.com)**

**Spoonbill Editor: Larry Dybala | 713-923-4040 | [larrydybala@gmail.com](mailto:larrydybala@gmail.com)**

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

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

[↑top↑](#)

