



**Monthly Meeting January 7, 2019**  
**Bayland Community Center**  
**6400 Bissonnet St, Houston, TX**

**6:30 pm Learning Corner: Review of Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) and CBC Attendance Raffle**

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

**7:15 pm Program: [A Wonderland of Winter Waterfowl by Kristine Rivers](#)**

**Field Trip: [Lonestar College Kingwood, February 9, 7:30 am, led by Michael Cooper](#); [Cullinan Park, Kingwood, February 23, 8:00 am, led by Mark Schuerman](#); [King Ranch Weekender, March 8-9](#)**

**[Minutes of December OG Meeting](#) | [Laas Farm Field Trip Report](#)  
[Upcoming Texas Birding Events \(link to web page\)](#)  
[Hart Beat: Northern Gannets and & Birder Folly \(link to web page\)](#)  
[2019 Dues are Due! \(link to web page\)](#)**

## **A Wonderland Winter Waterfowl**

**by Kristine Rivers**

The Upper Texas Gulf Coast provides a variety of habitats that attract winter waterfowl and other water birds such as loons and grebes, making it a wonderful birding destination during the fall and winter months. Identification of these birds can be somewhat tricky, however! This interactive presentation will cover the different family groups and provide information about behavior, habitat, and plumage that can aid in identification. Bring your favorite field guide if you would like to practice your identification skills.

Kristine Rivers grew up in Manvel, Texas and began birding at a very young age; by the time she was 14, she was serious enough about it that she participated in her first Christmas Bird Count with the National Audubon Society. She attended the University of Oklahoma as a Professional Zoology major with a primary interest in Ornithology, and was accepted into the Junior/Senior level Ornithology class as a Freshman. Although she didn't end up following that career path, she has continued to be an avid birder for her entire life. She has participated in every year of the Brazoria Christmas Bird Count since its inception in 1984, and was instrumental in working with the founder and compiler to start it back up again in 2010 after a 16-year lapse (the last year it had been held prior to that was 1994.) She has been an Area Leader for the Brazoria CBC (now known as the Brazoria-Columbia Bottomlands CBC) since 2013. In addition, over the years she

has participated in many other Christmas Bird Counts, including the Houston CBC, Freeport CBC, and Brazos Bend CBC. She has also participated in the Texas City Prairie Preserve Bird Count.

Kristine was the Birding Instructor for Pearland Parks & Recreation from 2015 through 2017, teaching children ages 6 – 14 in summer camp, and adults in both Beginning Birding and Intermediate Birding, as well as leading workshops at the Melvin Knapp Senior Activity Center. She has also acted as a Birding Instructor for the City of Meadows Place and Osher Lifelong Learning Center (OLLI) in Galveston. She is currently the Birding Instructor for the City of Missouri City, and leads nature events for the City of League City. She developed all of the curriculum, presentations, and field trips for these programs. She was a liaison for FeatherFest in 2016, a field trip leader in 2017, and a presenter and field trip leader in 2018. She has also been a guest speaker more than once for the Galveston County Audubon Group, a division of the Houston Audubon Society.

Kristine became a master naturalist in 2016, and soon began leading workshops and teaching summer camp classes about other native Texas wildlife in addition to birds. She has been the President of the Cradle of Texas Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists since January 2017.

Kristine loves sharing her passion for nature and wildlife with others, and founded Birding for Fun in 2015 to provide educational services, field trips and guided tours. [kristine@birdingforfun.com](mailto:kristine@birdingforfun.com).

[↑top↑](#)

## **Lonestar College Kingwood, February 9, 7:30 am**

### **Led by Michael Cooper**

Meet at 7:30 am at Nature Trailhead. Contact Teresa by text (505-280-7443) for location pinpoint for smart phones. Hotspot: Lone Star College – The Lowlands.

Lone Star Kingwood College Nature Trail is located at the intersection of Sorters Road and Royston Drive. Please park your car on Royston Drive, across from the tennis courts.

This trip will visit the Piney Woods during the birdiest time of the year. We will also learn much about the birds and local habitat from Michael, including the local summer breeders in this pristine Piney Woods forest. We will stroll for 3 miles along a beautifully wooded trail along Evans Gully and enjoy views of a gorgeous cypress swamp.

This is a membership-drive trip, open to all current, lapsed and new members. If you are interested in joining or renewing your OG group membership, please bring \$20 in the form of a check made out to Ornithology Group or cash. Membership is good for the 2019 calendar year.

**Target species include:** Brown Creeper, Winter Wren, Purple Finch, and all five species of Woodpecker, Golden-Crowned Kinglet, and Blue-Headed Vireo.

Anyone is welcome to join us for lunch at a nearby restaurant after the walk.

Field Trip Coordinator: Teresa Connell (505-280-7443)

Field Trip Leader: Michael Cooper (832-876-4912)

[↑top↑](#)

## **Cullinan Park, Sugarland, February 23, 8:00 am**

### **Led by Mark Schuerman**

Meet at 8:00 am at parking lot near White Lake. Expect to see 30-40 species of birds! Hotspot: Cullinan Park (Sugar Land)

The trail is about 3 miles along the creek and includes different habitats and White Lake with waders and waterfowl. Mark will show us the best locations and times to see exotics such as the Orange-cheek Waxbill, Bronze Manikin, and Scaly-breasted Munia.

Membership-drive trip. Open to all current, lapsed and new members. If you are interested in joining or renewing your OG group membership, please bring \$20 in the form of a check made out to Ornithology Group or cash. Membership is good for the 2019 calendar year.

**Target species:** Purple Finch, Couch's Kingbird, Golden-Crowned Kinglet, Pine Siskin, American Pipit, and Cedar Waxwing.

Everyone is welcome to join us afterwards for lunch at a local Thai Restaurant.

Field trip Coordinator: Teresa Connell (505-280-7443)

Field trip Leader: Mark Schuerman (281-384-7638)

[↑top↑](#)

## **Laas Farm Field Trip Report**

### **by Teresa Connell**

Although this trip was full, it was in jeopardy due to threats of flooding throughout Houston the night before. By early Saturday morning, we had a group of four brave and dedicated members ready for a glorious morning of birding. Trip leaders John Berner and Harvey Laas greeted us with cheerfull smiles and umbrellas freshly rinsed by the early morning rains. OG members Bob Honig, Bill Wright, and Janet Neath came prepared with appropriate field gear and rubber boats and were all ready to rock and roll! A new member and first-time field-tripper Jules Altman joined the group for an exciting morning at the Laas Ranch. We birded for two hours around

Harvey's property. A Great-Horned Owl took flight as we skirted around a small lake. We were comforted hearing Sedge, Carolina, and House Wrens. We counted six Northern Harriers searching for breakfast as we viewed the open fields. All of us spotted seven species of sparrows: White-Crowned, White-Throated, Song, Lincoln, Vesper, Savannah, and Fox. This place is a treasure trove of birds! Our second stop was at the rice fields, where John Berner attracted four local dogs that converged upon his car. The pack followed us for nearly 2 miles before giving up and finding other people to bother. The most persistent hound was an old female who after the chase, ended up watching us watch the ducks. We saw Belted Kingfisher, Least Sandpiper, Northern Pintail, American Widgeon, Northern Shoveled, Mottled, Gadwall, and Green-wing Teal. Including flyovers, like Snow Geese and Herons, we saw 55 species at the Laas Ranch and Rice fields. Afterwards, we warmed up and got lunch at Mamie's Kitchen (3811 Avenue G Brookshire, TX), a local favorite. Try the House Hash with Bacon next time your in the area. It's a winner!

[↑top↑](#)

## **Minutes of December 3, 2018 Meeting**

**by Jean Greenhalgh**

The December 2018 meeting of OG was held on December 3, 2018 at the Bayland Park Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet, at 6:30 pm. 21 members were present.

The meeting started with social time followed by announcements and a presentation.

Christmas Bird Counts start December 14 and Texas CBCs are listed in chronological order, together with other forthcoming birding events, on the OG website at <http://ornithologygroup.com/Events/>.

The main program was entitled Madagascar – The Eighth Continent presented by Lisa Li, with wonderful photos provided by her husband, Li Li.

This was a 24 day nature tour undertaken in September – October 2017. The group had 13 participants, 5 of whom were birders. There were two leaders, one American, who has lived in Madagascar, and a local guide. The birders persuaded the leaders to rise early, 5:00 am, to go birding and, as the remaining participants did not get up so early, the birders had good birding most days at the best time of the day.

Madagascar is an island in the Indian Ocean situated east of Mozambique and South Africa. It is the fourth biggest island in the world (226,658 sq mi) and is approximately 1,000 miles long. Geologically it was last connected to India and much of the fauna is endemic. They travelled by road and by internal flights, visiting four main areas. Because this was a general nature tour, some of these areas were different to those visited by international birding companies.

The infrastructure varied considerably. Transportation was varied. Roads were excellent in some places and very difficult in others, which had been devastated by recent cyclones. Some roads and bridges had been washed out and were full of potholes. There were few lights at night, so they did no night driving, even in cities. Internal flights were subject to unexpected cancellation, so they checked into airports very early in the day to avoid being bumped. Lodging was good to very good and restaurants were often excellent. As a previously French colony, (the Malagasy Republic) much of the cuisine was French influenced.

Madagascar has 292 bird species, 108 of which are endemic. There are many endemic insects and mammals too. They flew into the capital, Antananarivo, known as Tana, a couple of days before the start of the tour and birded Parc Tsarasaotro by themselves. They were rewarded with great views of White-faced Whistling Duck, Squacco and Black Herons, Madagascar White eye, Malagasy Kingfisher and White-throated Rail amongst others.

The group first drove to the east coast to the wettest part of the island, staying at Feony Lodge and visiting Andasibe-Mantadia National Park. Among others, here they saw Madagascar Blue-pigeon, Madagascar Coucal, Madagascar Paradise Flycatcher, Madagascar Grebe, Blue Coua, Collared and Madagascar nightjars, Short-legged and Scaly Ground-rollers, Hook-billed Vanga, Souimanga Sunbird and Forest Fody. Mammals included Aye Aye and Black and white ruffed lemur.

Next, they went to the west coast to Kirindy which was more for lemurs rather than birds, especially the Mouse Lemur. Birds seen included Frances's Sparrowhawk, Madagascar Harrier-Hawk, Rufous Vanga, Coquerel's Coua, Sakalava Weaver, Madagascar Hoopoe and White-breasted Mesite. Then a drive north to Tsingy de Bamaraha National Park where the Red-fronted Brown Lemur was seen. Birds included the Madagascar Green-pigeon, Madagascar Turtle-dove, Chabert and White-headed Vangas, Broad-billed Roller, Crested Drongo and Crested Coua.

Then they flew South to Benty which is the driest area comprising spiny forest, with forests of Madagascar Ocotillo. Here they saw Ring-tailed lemurs and birds included Malagasy Scops-Owl, Madagascar Magpie-Robin, Common Newtonia and White-browed Owl.

This was followed by driving north to Ranomafana National Park which is on the central highland plateau. Lemurs included the Golden Bamboo lemur and the Greater Bamboo lemur. Birds included the Pitta-like Ground-Roller, Velvet Asity, Common Jery, Forest Rock-Thrush and Madagascar Pygmy Kingfisher which was Lisa's most wanted bird and seen on the last day.

The trip finished with a drive back to Tana and the long flight back to the USA.

[↑top↑](#)

## **Ornithology Group Officers**

**Chair:** Nina Rach | 281-433-0651 | NRach@autrevie.com

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

**Secretary** | Jean Greenhalgh | JeanBrit01@yahoo.com

**Treasurer:** Harlan Evans | 713-797-6468 | harlanj42@sbcglobal.net

**Clearing House:** David Sarkozi | 713-412-4409 | david@sarkozi.net

**Swifts:** Pam Smolen | pjsmolen@att.net

**Membership:** Michael Honel | 713-432-1985 | michaelhonor@sbcglobal.net

**Field Trips:** Teresa Connell | 505-280-7443 | teresaconnell@live.com

**Spoonbill Editor:** Larry Dybala | 713-923-4040 | larrydybala@gmail.com

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

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

[↑top↑](#)