



The Spoonbill

A Publication of the Ornithology Group (OG)
of the Houston Outdoor Nature Club

October 2007
Vol. 56 No. 8

October Meeting

Monday, October 1, 2007 -- 7:00 p.m.

Bayland Community Center
6400 Bissonnet, Houston

Learning Corner (6:30): Michael Williams

Program: A Trip to the Amazon

George Regmund will share his July 2007 adventures on the Amazon River. The Amazon is the largest river system in the world, containing about one-sixth of the planet's total surface freshwater. Because of its tropical climate and unique geography, the Amazon experiences seasonal changes in water levels (30-40 feet) like no other place in the world. During his presentation George will tell us about his search for the many birds of the Amazon, including macaws, parrots, toucans, flycatchers, antbirds, kingfishers, hoatzins, screamers, trogons, manakins, and cotingas.

George Regmund grew up in Corpus Christi, spending much time exploring Padre Island and the South Texas brush land. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology from Stephen F. Austin State University with an emphasis on terrestrial zoology, especially ornithology, herpetology, and entomology.

George worked at Armand Bayou Nature Center for over 26 years. In January 2003 he and colleague Mary Alice Trumble founded Skimmer Nature Tours. He has led U.S. and international birding and natural history oriented field trips to Arizona, California, Maine, Hawaii, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago, Canada, Mexico, and many areas of Texas.

Other Events

Sept. 30 (Sunday): Beginning Birder/New Member Trip 1
to Cullinan Park

Oct. 13: Beginning Birder/New Member Trip 2 to Galveston Island

Oct. 20: Kleb Woods Nature Preserve
with Fred Collins

Oct. 20: Katy Prairie Family Day

Nov. 5: Monthly OG meeting
Citizen Science with Fred Collins

Nov. 17: Brazos Bend State Park
with Bill Godley

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Stamps

Current temperatures notwithstanding, fall and winter will arrive. With those lower temperatures the ducks and geese will arrive. Do you go seeking waterfowl? Where do you go to enjoy winter birds? If you visit National Wildlife Refuges--Anahuac, Attwater, Brazoria, or San Bernard--have you purchased a "duck stamp"? The Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp actually went on sale on June 22. The stamps are valid from July 1 through June 30 next year. The funds, as you may well know, go toward wetland and grassland conservation. Proceeds since 1934 have purchased or leased more than 6 million acres in the NWR system.

I was pleasantly surprised when my postal service clerk actually knew what I was talking about when I asked for a "duck stamp." And, she thought I might want more than one...birthday gifts or stocking stuffers for birding friends? They are also available on line at www.duckstamp.com and www.usps.com

And speaking of stamps, did you know that you could order regular U.S. postage stamps and support wildlife conservation at the same time? The American Bird Conservancy has launched this new method to "Save our Songbirds" and "Stamp out Extinction". The two options are Cerulean Warbler and Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Twenty seven per cent of the net profit from the forty-one cent stamps supports conservation efforts. You may order them via www.abcbirds.org or www.zazzle.com.

As a follow-up to the August *Spoonbill* query, few members made a comment about having August meetings. Those who did all were strongly in favor of continuing the meeting. The fact that 73 persons attended on August 6 speaks loudest of all. Thanks for your support!

--Bernice Hotman, OG Chairperson

Minutes of the September 10, 2007 Meeting

Bayland Community Center

Attendance: 57

- 1. Learning Corner:** Michael Williams discussed birding in Houston parks. Michael uses a Key Map to locate the parks. There are many excellent parks for birding in the Houston area and the best ones have some type of water feature.
- 2. Sightings:** Bernice Hotman opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with bird sightings. Sightings included Mississippi Kites in Bellaire, the Westchase District and Bear Creek Park; Wood Storks in Brazoria NWR, 400 Chimney Swifts at Whole Foods on Bellaire, an Alder Flycatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee and Greater Roadrunner at Kleb Woods, Bank Swallows at Bear Creek Park, and Broad-winged Hawks in Bellaire and Bear Creek Park.
- 3. Minutes** of the August meeting were accepted as printed in *The Spoonbill*.

About the Ornithology Group

The Ornithology Group (OG) is a division of the Outdoor Nature Club (ONC), a non-profit organization dedicated to greater knowledge about the environment and wildlife of the Upper Texas Coast. The OG is a club of individuals interested in all aspects of birding, including bird identification, listing bird sightings, competing in birding events, and preserving bird habitat. Some members study bird behavior, biology, distribution and migration, while others just enjoy watching birds. The organization is designed to accommodate these diverse birding interests. Monthly meetings and field trips provide an opportunity to interact with and learn from experts in local and international birding.

Chair:	Bernice Hotman	713-782-7889
Vice-Chair:	Pam Smolen	832-212-1368
Secretary:	Cindy Douglass	713-644-4803
Treasurer:	Jim Winn	713-464-8057
Clearing House:	David Sarkozi	713-412-4409
Library:	Andy Scott	281-251-4815
Membership:	Margret Simmons	713-776-2511
Field Trips:	Adam Wood	713-515-1692
Learning Corner:	Michael Williams	713-228-9064

The Spoonbill: Al Shultz 281-829-0970
Email: og_spoonbill@earthlink.net

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

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

4. **Library:** Andy Scott announced that there are new additions in the library and encouraged everyone to stop by to see what is available.
5. **Membership:** Margret Simmons encouraged everyone to sign in so she can get an accurate count.
6. **Houston Arboretum:** Luc Bouffard, a representative from the Houston Arboretum, announced that several birding and nature classes are taking place this fall. Flyers were available. Registration is available online at www.houstonarboretum.org.
7. **Field Trips:** Adam Wood reported that several OG members participated in the Bolivar Bird Survey on August 18, led by Tom Kihn. Total number of species seen was 98, which included Wilson's Plover, Marbled Godwit, Short-billed Dowitcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Virginia Rail, American Redstart and Nashville Warbler. The next field trip, on September 22 to the Smith Point Hawk Watch, is led by John Arvin of the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory. Adam will lead a beginner birder trip on Sunday, September 30th at Cullinan Park. It will be a very easy pace.
8. **Program:** Bernice introduced John Berner, a Texas eBird administrator in charge of approving popular birding locations (a.k.a. birding hotspots) submitted by users. Houston has 15 Hotspots on eBird. Mr. Berner showed slides on how to use eBird. The website is www.ebird.org and is administered by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. Users each control their own data, and can change or delete records at any time. There are now 40,000 individual users of this online system, with 1,500 species reported, 39,000 checklists from Texas and 8,400 from the Upper Texas Coast. The Clearing House records printed in *The Spoonbill* data now come from eBird.
9. Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.
--Cindy Douglass

Beginning Birder & New Member Trip 2: Galveston Island

October 13, 2007

Are you a beginning birder or a new member? Are you interested in finding out more about OG before joining our regular monthly trips? If so, then this trip is for you. This trip is to a different location from September's trip, with a different type of habitat, but will be run in the same manner as the first trip. You will have the opportunity to improve your birding skills in a low-pressure environment, where we will not be worried about the number of birds we see. I have been birding for 15 years, and have been birding the Upper Texas Coast and surrounding counties intensively since 2004. I have been a member of the Houston Ornithology Group for the past three years and am currently serving my second term as Field Trip Coordinator. I am largely a self-taught birder. So come on out to Lafitte's Cove ready to meet new people and to ask questions and learn more about birding and the birding community.

We will meet in the parking lot for Lafitte's Cove at 8:00 a.m. To reach this area, proceed west on Seawall Boulevard (also FM 3005), and turn right (north) onto 8 Mile Road and go to the intersection with Stewart Road. Continue west (left) on Stewart Road, past 11 Mile Road, and turn right into the Lafitte's Cove Subdivision and follow the signs to the parking area.. We will bird for as long as the group wishes, and I will be willing to stay as late as the last person to make sure that everybody sees most of what they want to see and gets all their questions asked.

Be sure to bring binoculars, hat, sunscreen, water, snacks, a camp chair (we may be staying in one spot for quite some time at points during the trip), camera, and a lunch if you plan on birding in the afternoon.

-- Adam Wood, OG Field Trip Coordinator

birdsondabrain@earthlink.net

713-515-1692

Kleb Woods Nature Preserve -- October 20, 2007

This month's trip will be to one of Houston's newest nature preserves. Kleb Woods, dedicated in 1994, consists of 132 acres and is located in northwest Harris County. This former homestead of the Kleb family was set aside by Elmer Kleb, great-grandson of German immigrants who settled in western Harris County in the 1840s. Fred Collins, the director of Kleb Woods Nature Preserve, will be our guide for the day. Fred is a very knowledgeable person who is willing to share his wealth of information with anybody who is willing to listen to his stories.

"Throughout the year these woods harbor more than 114 species of plants, 29 species of butterflies, 16 species of reptiles and amphibians, 13 species of mammals and 120 species of birds, but most importantly--many memories. Walking through the preserve I see long-tailed skippers, wary of my approach, skip over the lantana that blooms at the edge of the homestead clearing. Often, white-tailed deer bounce through the woods. Or a Roadrunner scoots away so quickly and silently that it could be Elmer's ghost. Red-bellied Woodpeckers drum a steady beat that blends all the sights and sounds into a symphony of sensory stimulations, reminding me of Elmer's gift for all of us who will stop, watch and listen to what these deep roots shelter," said Fred, describing some of his experiences in the preserve.

This is a trip you will not want to miss. So come out and join us for what should be a lovely autumn day of birding in a place that has a lot of history and is one of Houston's newest preserves.

We will meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot to Kleb Woods Nature Preserve. Kleb Woods Nature Preserve is in NW Harris County on FM2920 about a mile west of Mueschke Road. The section that includes the Nature Center and Heritage Farm (20301 Mueschke Road) is a 100-acre parcel on Draper Road about 3/4 mile south of FM2920 off Mueschke Road. From Houston go northwest on Highway 290 past Cypress to the Mueschke Road exit. Turn right (north) and go about 7 miles. The road makes a sharp jog and a couple of miles later the road makes a lazy bend through a more wooded area. The brush is cleared from beneath the trees on your left. The next road to the left is Draper. You will see a green and white park sign for Kleb Woods Nature Preserve, Nature Center and Heritage Farm with an arrow pointing west down Draper Road. Continue west on Draper about 1500 feet to a large parking lot on the left with two sets of green and white gates with another Kleb Woods park sign between them. (The gates at the far end of Draper are not to the parking lot.) Park in the lot and walk down the granite path to the nature center building. Key Map: 286-P

Be sure to bring: Binoculars, hat, sunscreen, snacks, water, camera, spotting scope and rain gear in case it rains.

~ Adam Wood, OG Field Trip Coordinator

birdsondabrain@earthlink.net

713-515-1692

Katy Prairie Family Day October 20

On behalf of the Katy Prairie Conservancy (KPC), I would like to invite members of the Ornithology Group to join us for KPC's 2007 Family Day on the Farm, from 9:00 a.m. to noon on October 20, 2007. This free and exciting community event will be held at our scenic 1,700-acre Nelson Farms Preserve and will be a great opportunity to raise public awareness about the incredibly diverse green spaces that provide recreational opportunities in the Greater Houston area.

This event will provide families an opportunity to enjoy fun, interactive education stations; tour the farm with a seasoned guide, take a hayride, see farming equipment up close; enjoy a delicious barbeque lunch from an expert local grill-master; and just enjoy the Flat Out Wonderful Katy Prairie.

Our activities will focus on the crucial role that water plays in sustaining local habitats like KPC's Nelson Farms Preserve (much of which serves as wintering grounds for thousands of waterfowl each year). We could use your help to make this a day to remember. As a participant at our event, the Katy Prairie Conservancy will also provide you with a free barbeque lunch.

To confirm your participation at the 2007 Family Day on the Farm, contact Marina Rossow by phone at 713.523.6135 or by

Note: Unfortunately, a conflict with the date of the October OG field trip may prevent some members from participating in Family Day, but there will be other chances to learn more about KPC and participate in their offerings. KPC activities are supported by many OG members, and KPC properties offer great birding opportunities. See www.katyprairie.org for information on other events including tours, volunteer orientation, and birding events. --
Editor

email at info@katyprairie.org at least two weeks prior to the event. We look forward to seeing you at the Flat Out Wonderful Katy Prairie for our 2007 Family Day on the Farm!

-- *Jaime Gonzalez,*
KPC Community Education Coordinator

Field Trip Report: Bolivar Bird Survey, August 18, 2007

On August 18, 2007 a few OG members participated in the monthly Bolivar Bird Survey coordinated by Tom Kihn. It was a fairly nice morning for mid-August due to all the rain in the area. Scattered thundershowers didn't hit the survey area until after we had finished, so I believe we all managed to stay dry. Densities beyond expectations of eBird were observed for the following species: Wilson's Plover, Marbled Godwit, Short-billed Dowitcher and Red-eyed Vireo. Other notable observations flagged by eBird were: Virginia Rail, Nashville Warbler and American Redstart.

We didn't break 100 but we added 13 new species to the August list for the count over the last 3 years. After lunch 3 of us checked out the nearby "bird sanctuary" (vacant lot with many trees) and while we were there a flock of migrants arrived, including Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Red-eyed Vireo, Yellow Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, and a soaring Broad-winged Hawk. There was another bird near it but the hawk distracted us from noting what it was. At another wooded lot we found Black-and-white, Nashville, and Canada Warblers. The weather was not overly hot, and best of all, there was not a line for the ferry back to Galveston!

Location: Bolivar - Port Bolivar area
Observation date: 8/18/07
Observers: Adam Wood, Martine Got, Horacio Zea, Joe Kennedy, Cindy Douglass, Debbie Lancaster, Simon Tan, John Baird, Jane Herring, John Kirschner, Kathleen Hunsdorf, March Brown, Tom Kihn(compiler)
Number of species: 98
-- *Tom Kihn, Bolivar Bird Survey Compiler*

Meteor Shower

September and October give Houston birders many chances to see migrant birds of all kinds. The Smith Point Hawk Watch is one of the most dependable, and this year was no exception. The OG trip there on September 22, led by John Arvin, was a fine clinic for becoming more confident in separating kites from buteos and Sharp-shins from Coopers. The star performers, the Broad-winged Hawks that can number in the thousands, were there too, even if not in record numbers. But my favorite memories of this fall's Broad-wings are not from Smith Point, but from closer to home -- in fact, at home in the Katy suburbs after returning from Smith Point.

Since moving to the Houston area several years ago, Kathie and I have learned to check the morning sky a couple of hours after sunrise in late September. I do this from the comfort of my front yard when I am home on weekends. Some days the Broad-wings rise up out of the trees in nearby Barker Reservoir, either to gather into kettles in the warming air, or to stream overhead low and fast on a northerly tailwind. Some days there are no hawks. But since dozens, even hundreds, can appear and then vanish in just a few minutes, I can never be sure when they are not there. The best time seems to be between nine and ten o'clock; later than that, and the Broad-wings have apparently gained cruising altitude and are on their way to Corpus Christi and onward around the Gulf toward the tropics for the winter. On weekday mornings when I am at my office job, I resent missing the chance to look for the migrant hawks during the short season of their passage. And a weekend visit to Smith Point gives me a renewed sense of the scale and rhythm of migration. So I should have returned home that Saturday content and ready to tackle my overdue paperwork or housecleaning

indoors. But instead, I found myself watering some newly planted flowers and shrubs to revive them from the parching afternoon sun. And, out of habit, I scanned the sky.

A speck swept into view from the southwest, followed by a couple of others. A familiar silhouette glided over the treetops just behind the house, banking and catching the sun: white underwings with a dark edging, a fanned tail with bold black and white bands. Wheeling and soaring birds with wings tapering to points, gliding birds with wing tips swept back and trailing edges straight -- the "candle flame" and "paring knife" shapes noted by the Cape May hawk-watchers such as David Sibley and Pete Dunne. High overhead, more hawks seemed to be arriving from all directions, pulled toward a tract of woods by something unseen. Before Google Earth, before airplanes, who knew what the world looked like from high overhead? Even now, how can we guess what the hawks see? How do they decide that yes, here and now, they will pass the night in those trees down there? Unlike truly flocking birds, whose movements seem to be tightly controlled so that they behave almost like a single organism, the Broad-wings are still individuals. One by one, they approached the woods in their own styles: some on long glide paths as if governed by air traffic control, some in sudden vertical drops of a thousand feet, as dramatic as any falcon's stoop. The whole picture was thrilling, patterned but unpredictable, like fireworks.

When I was a boy, even before I started birding, I loved astronomy. Every year I would get hold of an almanac with dates of notable celestial events, and I would set my alarm clock to get up in the middle of the night to see whatever spectacle was on offer. Eclipses were fine, and precision of their forecasting was as fascinating as the events themselves. On the other hand, meteor showers had an element of chance,

and for this very unpredictability they seemed even more addictive. The almanac was quite precise about the dates of the best nights for the Perseids in August and the Leonids in November. Nonetheless, there was an element of luck, or faith, in catching the peak of the shower. It was easy to give up too soon on the basis of a quick scan. Even a few sightings were a good reward for a little patience.

So here I am again, gazing at the sky during a precise season, hoping to spot a sudden bright streak falling toward the earth. Seeing dozens or hundreds of hawks is a real treat, but seeing even one is a reward for looking. It is a sign that I have become a witness to a natural event that might easily pass unnoticed, even though it goes on over our heads every year.

—Al Shultz

Address Lists and Email

A note of explanation is in order about how we in OG and ONC use email. There are at least three separate lists of addresses for club purposes:

1. The ONC Yearbook publishes the names, addresses, and phone numbers of members. Email addresses are included in the Yearbook as a membership service, since many of us use email as a way of contacting each other. The membership roster is kept by the membership officer, Margret Simmons.
2. Members who request it can receive *The Spoonbill* in electronic form by email. This is a separate list kept by the editor. Because the electronic Spoonbill is a fairly large email attachment (around 150 KB), not all members want it in their email, so we send it only by request.
3. There is a list-server for automatically sending a message to all members of a group. Only members of the group can send such messages, and group membership is regulated by a “list owner.” The list called “Houston-OG” is owned by Margret Simmons and David Sarkozi. Contact either of them to be added to the list, which is used for meeting reminders and other short announcements, and is not limited to OG members.

Like a lot of things that are supposed to make our life easier, this is not always easy! Please help us keep our lists in order and notify us of any problems or errors. --Editor

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Ornithology Group
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The Spoonbill Wants Your Help...

Stories, notes, trip reports, or other materials for future issues are always welcome. Send to the Editor at

og_spoonbill@earthlink.net

TO START OR RENEW A MEMBERSHIP:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-Mail: _____

	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Family</i>
ONC Annual Dues:	\$ 8.00	\$ 15.00
OG Annual Dues:	\$ 14.00	\$ 19.00
Total:	\$ 22.00	\$ 34.00

Additional contributions are welcome in any amount.

Send to:

Outdoor Nature Club
PO Box 270894
Houston TX 77277-0894

Membership questions? Contact Margret Simmons
phone 713-776-2511
msimmons@compassnet.com

Discount for Electronic *Spoonbill*

Members who do not wish to receive a printed copy of *The Spoonbill* can save \$4 off their dues:

	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Family</i>
ONC	\$ 8.00	\$ 15.00
OG	\$ 10.00	\$ 15.00
Total	\$ 18.00	\$ 30.00

To receive a PDF version of *The Spoonbill* by email each month, contact: og_spoonbill@earthlink.net or msimmons@compassnet.com