

The Pine Warbler



Piney Woods Wildlife Society October Program

“Timing & Location when Birding including Lower Rio Grande Valley Bird Photos”

By Paul Gregg



Paul and Carol Gregg going on an adventure



Bird Nerds

For the October program for Piney Woods, Paul Gregg will be presenting "Timing & Location when Birding including Lower Rio Grande Valley Bird Photos". Paul will share strategies on how to be successful birding and ultimately taking photos. He'll be showing many of his bird photos from his and Carol's November 2022 trip to various locations in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) area to search for birds. Birding the Rio Grande Valley is claimed to be where the Lone Star State's birding is at its best. The area is a major migration corridor and an excellent location for tropical species extending their range beyond Mexico. Paul will show photos of various birds they found during the 4 or 5 days they were there. The program takes place on Tuesday, October 17th, at 6:30 p.m. with social time at 6 p.m.

Paul Gregg is an avid, amateur photographer interested mostly in birds, wildlife, and travel/landscapes. He has given presentations to a number of wildlife and photography groups, but has also given basic photography lessons to Lone Star College's "Adult Lifelong Learning" classes.. He is retired from the Adult Probation Department of Harris Co., TX. Before that, he retired from a little over 29 years in the U. S. Air Force (active and reserve). He's married to Carol Anderson Gregg, who accompanies him on most of his photography outings.

The October program for PWWS will be ONLY in-person and takes place on Tuesday, October 17th, at 6:30 p.m. (snacks & social time at 6:00 p.m.) at Dennis Johnston's Big Stone Lodge. We have decided beginning with February 2023 that we are going back to in-person meetings only. Please join us at the Big Stone Lodge located in Dennis Johnston County Park at 709 Riley Fuzzel

Road, Spring, Texas 77373.

Latest rules for bringing snacks: We are still not allowed to bring homemade items to the Big Stone Lodge (unfortunately) for social time. However, store bought items brought by members are welcome and NO LONGER have to be individually wrapped now. Yeah!



Aplomado Falcon - Photo by Paul Gregg



Green Jay - Photo by Paul Gregg



Clay-colored Thrush - Photo by Paul Gregg



Harris's Hawk - Photo by Paul Gregg



Note from PWWS President

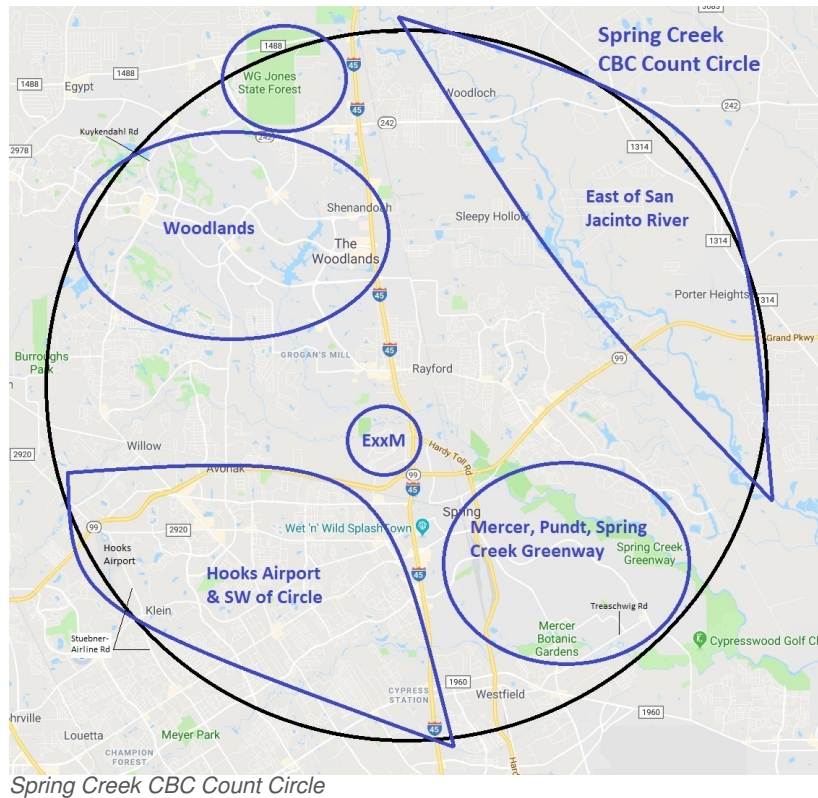
We had a wonderful and well attended presentation for September on The Saint Francis Wolf Sanctuary. For October we will have a wonderful presentation on Birding the Rio Grande Valley by one of our own members, Paul Gregg. Be sure to tell your friends and invite them to see his wonderful photography and presentation. Look forward to seeing you.

Your President,
Kathy



SAVE THE DATE! Saturday, December 16th, 2023

by Claire Moore



If you will be around on Saturday 12/16, please plan to join PWWs to help survey the birds present in our Spring Creek Christmas Bird Count circle. Several teams of bird watchers will be out in the field on Saturday, December 16th, counting up all the birds that can be found in our 15 mile diameter CBC circle which is roughly centered at I45 at the Rayford Sawdust exit.

If you're not able to go into the field and happen to live inside the count circle above, you can help out immensely as a "feeder watcher" sending in your observations made on Saturday, December 16th, to be included in the official CBC results.

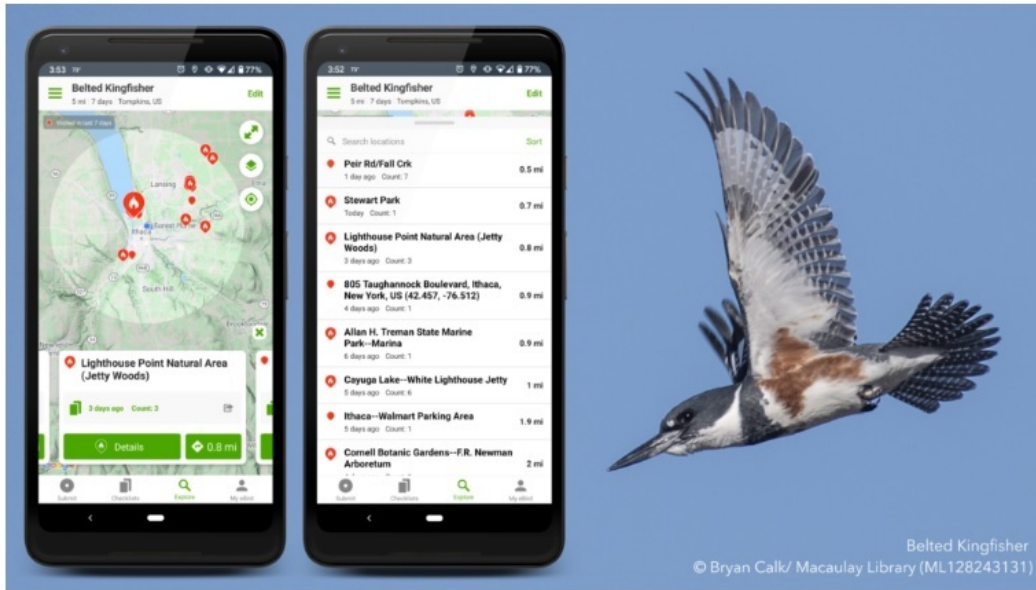
Regardless, go ahead and highlight that day on your calendars and let Claire know (via email at cdmoore3i@gmail.com) if you can help out in either capacity.

FYI, we are not planning on having a "count dinner" this year, but that should return next year in 2024.

Using eBird App to Explore Nearby Birds

by Claire Moore

Explore species on eBird Mobile



I highly recommend installing the (free) eBird app on your Android or Apple phone. It's a great tool to have at your disposal when traveling and want to know what birds or birding hot spots are nearby.

Information on how to install the app & use the app is here:

<https://support.ebird.org/en/support/solutions/articles/48000957940-enter-sightings-with-ebird-mobile>

Information on how to use the app to "Explore" nearby birds is at this link along with a video: <https://ebird.org/news/explore-species-on-ebird-mobile>

Basically, you go to the "Explore" option in eBird, then you use "Edit" to set your radius, time period and Targets options. Then, just click on the map to see hot spots in the radius you specified. The "Targets" are birds that you haven't seen yet (according to all your bird sightings documented at eBird.org). This is VERY useful for folks looking to see new birds that they haven't seen before!

Try it! You'll love it!



A Little Chicken on the Prairie

By Cheryl Conley, Board of Directors Lake Creek Greenway



Prairie Chicken - Photo by Cheryl Conley

They once ranged across coastal Texas and Louisiana and are one of the rarest and strangest species of birds in the country. There were once close to one million of them and now fewer than 200 are left in the wild. They are one of the most endangered birds in the USA. Can you guess what it is? It's Attwater's prairie chicken. So what happened? The reasons for their decline are the loss of their habitat, habitat fragmentation, overhunting and imported red fire ants.

Named after British-born naturalist Henry Attwater, the Attwater's prairie chicken is actually a member of the North American grouse family. In the wild, they require both short and tall grasses. During mating season, males will gather in an area of bare ground or short grasses called "leks." Here they are very visible to the females. Males inflate their air sacs, raise their tails, droop their wings and stomp their feet while "dancing" around. It is believed that the mating dances were the inspiration for many of the dances performed by the Native American tribes of coastal Texas and Louisiana. Very dense, tall grasses are required for nest-building. Hens will lay between 10 and 14 eggs that will hatch in about 26 days. Because of predators, only 3 in 10 eggs hatch.

Although they're endangered and there's only around 200 left in the wild, there is hope. There is a recovery effort in place to ensure that the bird will recover. A team of researchers and wildlife experts from across the country has been assembled to guide the recovery. Here are some of those participating:

- The US Fish and Wildlife Service
- The Nature Conservancy Texas City Prairie Preserve

- Teas Parks and Wildlife
- Texas A&M
- Fossil Rim Wildlife Center – Attwater's Prairie Chicken
- Houston Zoo
- San Antonio Zoo
- Sea World – San Antonio

Located just 60 miles west of Houston is the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge. It is home to one of the largest remaining areas of native coastal prairie in southeast Texas, the habitat required for the survival of the prairie chicken.

The best hope for saving the birds is through captive breeding. The very first chicks hatched through captive breeding took place in 1992 at Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in Glen Rose, Texas. Since then, several more zoos and institutions have joined in the effort. Once the captive birds are old enough to survive on their own, they are fitted with a radio transmitter and taken to specific release sites. They live in pens for about 2 weeks while they adjust and then they are released. The transmitters allow biologists and experts to monitor their movements and survival.

It's always a sad day when an animal goes on the endangered species list but Attwater's Prairie Chicken just may be one that is able to come off the list someday. Let's hope!



Big Stone Lodge Educational Program
Misguided Monsters Whooo's There?



Misguided Monsters Whooo's There?

Get a better view of an elusive nighttime predator – owls. Learn about hunting adaptations, diet, and meet a live owl!

All ages welcome. Costumes encouraged!



Register
online at
pct3.com

Wednesday, October 4th
6 - 7:30 p.m.
Big Stone Lodge

For more info email
parkprograms@pct3.hctx.net
or call (713) 274-4201

If interested, sign up following instructions above

The Saint Francis Wolf Sanctuary Presents!

FESTIVAL OF THE WOLVES

Tickets sold at the Door

\$14 per person

5yrs and younger are free

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2023

10 am to 5pm

Keeper Talks

Artisan Vendors

Food Trucks

Kid's Zone

Silent Auction





National Butterfly Center - Mission, Texas

Photos by Luciano Guerra



Ceranus Blue - 9-27-2023 - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Empress Leilia - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Celia's Roadside-Skipper at National Butterfly Center - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Queen - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Lyside Sulphur 9-27-2023 - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Bordered Patch caterpillar - Photo by Luciano Guerra



Ruby-throated Hummingbird by Luciano Guerra



Zizotes Milkweed - Photo taken at the National Butterfly Center - Photo by Luciano Guerra

Hawk Migration by National Butterfly Center in Mission Texas

Follow the link below:

<https://fb.watch/nlYok2jfzF/>



Photos by Randy Scott



Randy in Texas

Photo by Randy Scott



Randy in Texas

Photo by Randy Scott



This week I went to Deer Lake in our neighborhood just before sunset. I was told I could get a nice view from the east side pf the lake. I took photos with two different cameras at different times and these are just examples of the results. Colors and reflections. #conroetx #sunsets - Photo by Randy Scott



From the condo at Port Aransas tonight, 9-27-2023 - Photo by Randy Scott



Rain in the Gulf near Port Aransas, not much but it has been bone dry.- 9-27-2023 Photo by Randy Scott



German Oktoberfest fun Bettina & Randy Scott



One of the Fall wildflowers in the wilderness behind our home. #conroetx - 9-13-2023 - Photo by Randy Scott



The twins in our Passion Vines. We eat them if we can get to them before the Coons.9-13-2023 - Photo by Randy Scott



Roadrunner, fast, agile and smart bird. Really representative of Texas. This was taken near Canyon Lake.- 3-22-2023 - Photo by Randy Scott



Randy in Texas

#ConroeTx This is a male Nutmeg Mannikin. Although in Texas and migrating with other seasonal birds, it is normally found in California. Western birds often show up misplaced here in the eastern part of the country. It may find a mate in Central or South America in the migration or even be flying with a mate in the migration. I just don't know. But I do know I was totally surprised to see it in my backyard on a ground feeder eating seeds. He is of the Finch family and was eating alongside of a dove. We saw these birds in Hawaii. They are originally a native of Asia. They are also known as Scaly-breasted Munia but they are not known to be migratory. So this is a mystery. This species has been reported elsewhere in the state of Texas. So the story continues to unfold. - Photo by Randy Scott



Randy in Texas

Over 300,000,000 bird Fall migrants are in the air last night and tonight (Sept 8th 2023) in Texas. Among them was this Baltimore Oriole in my backyard caught feeding on Grape Jelly. These birds are easily spooked. Guidelines to view from inside your home: Wear dark clothes Never approach a bird directly. Always move only side to side or an angle. Use blinds to partly cover your presence at windows. Do not move suddenly in the house. Do not have the TV flashing that they can see from outside. Wear sunglasses if you can. Many are spooked by human eyes. Birds see colors differently than we do and some colors are picked up as they scan for human or animal presence. Current reference: Migration tools - BirdCast - Photo



Photos by Bill Miller



Long drought + heavy rain = rain-lily explosion - Photo by Bill Miller



Yellow rain-lily - Photo by Bill Miller



Yellow rain-lily - Photo by Bill Miller



Whale-watching in the Gulf of Maine 8-27-23 - Photo by Bill Miller



Photos by Jim Snyder



The Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are beginning to arrive in College Station, TX during the 2023 Fall Migration. Here are some action shots that I took today 9-1-2023 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Hummingbird - 9-2-2023 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Hummingbird - 9-2-2023 - Photo by Jim Snyder



More photos of Ruby-throated Hummingbird aerial acrobatics. - 9-2-2023 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Hummingbird - 9-2-2023 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Ruby-throated Hummingbird - 9-2-2023 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Hummingbird - 9-2-2023 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Hummingbird - 9-2-2023 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Hummingbirds - 9-2-2023 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Hummingbird - 9-2-2023 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Hummingbird - 9-2-2023 - Photo by Jim Snyder



Male Ruby-throated hummingbird getting nectar from Purple Porterweed. 9-2-2023 - Photo by Jim Snyder



I found a mating pair of Monarch butterflies on our sweet potato plants today, 9-12-2023 - Photo by Jim Snyder



They are so cute when they sit on their perch. 9-16-2023 - Photo by Jim Snyder



4 more Eastern Black Swallowtails emerged today bringing this year's butterfly rearing count to 21 Eastern Black Swallowtails and 108 total! These 4 transformed into chrysalises last April. It usually takes about 10 days to 2 weeks for the adult butterflies to emerge but these 4 took over 4 months! Photo by Jim Snyder



Black Swallowtail - By Jim Snyder



Black Swallowtail - By Jim Snyder



And another Black Swallowtail today! - Photo by Jim Snyder



CREATOR'S CANVAS-SEED-EATING BIRDS/THE

GROSBEAKS!

By Wayne Easley



grosbeak, rose-breasted in peaceful valley, nd., may of 2011 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley

Grosbeaks are known for their over-sized bills. We have 34 species in the world but only 5 are regular in the United States. Grosbeaks use their big bills to crack open seeds. They feed on sunflowers, corn, and peanuts but grosbeaks do feed on insects and fruit as well. At first thought one would think they would make up a separate family of birds but that is not the case here with some of our grosbeaks are members of the finch family while others are members of the cardinal family. Male birds are more brightly colored than the females and they are pretty much similar in size and shape.

The Red-breasted Grosbeak is a bird of the Eastern United States. The Red-breasted Grosbeaks are mostly black and white with a gorgeous red breast and that huge bill. Be careful with the female Rose-breasted as they are very similar to the female Black-Headed Grosbeaks, which live in the Western part of the US. Male Black-heads have the black head, a brown body and wings that are black and white. In between the two grosbeaks we have described, one may encounter the mid-sized Blue Grosbeak. Males are blue with two brown wing-bars. They live more in weedy fields and open pastures and forage quite often low in the weeds. Female Blue Grosbeaks are more drab brown with a touch of blue in their body colors. Pine Grosbeaks are large grosbeaks that live in the pine, spruce and fir forests of the north. The male bird is an attractive reddish pink with some gray on the wings while the female is mostly gray with some dull

orange on the head and rump. One of our most exciting grosbeaks is the Evening Grosbeak. They tend to live in Canada and our northern states but they do move around a lot. We could call them true nomads. These somewhat chunky black, brown and yellow striped birds may show up anywhere. The females are not nearly as attractive as the males and are best known for their massive olive-gray bill. Evening Grosbeaks tend to nest high up in Pine Trees.

We were surprised on recent birding trips to Portal, Arizona to find that a sizeable flock of Evening Grosbeaks have invaded that community. Portal is situated almost on Arizona's eastern border with New Mexico. It is one of the hot spots for birds in Arizona and has not had a flock of Evening Grosbeaks in many many years. One of our favorite places in Portal is a spot called Cave Creek Ranch with cabins and photo opportunities. We found a good number of Evening Grosbeaks were feeding there alongside other very interesting birds. There was just one problem: the Evening Grosbeaks were there in the mornings. Oh well, to each his own! Here is hoping you will enjoy seeing and learning more about the grosbeaks!

Wayne Easley/written on May 16, 2023/Sierra Vista, Arizona!

PICTURES: CAN BE USED FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES!



grosbeak, black-headed at ash canyon sanctuary on may 5, 2023 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



grosbeak, black-headed at ash canyon reserve, az., may 5, 2023 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



grosbeak, evening at cave creek rancho, az., march 23, 2023 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



grosbeak, blue near cleburne, texas, may 6, 2015 RD Photo by Wayne Easley



grosbeak, blue at ash canyon sanctuary, az., may 12 of 2023 R3 - Photo by Wayne Easley



grosbeak, pine in minn., feb., of 2010 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley

CREATOR'S CANVAS-THE NEW WORLD BUNTINGS/SOME OF OUR MOST COLORFUL BIRDS!

Photos by Wayne Easley



bunting, painted near cleburne, tex., may of 2015 RD- Photo by Wayne Easley

Among the forty-five or so buntings in the world, those of the Americas are the

most colorful. Buntings are medium sized birds with short stubby bills that are adapted for seed-eating. They spend a lot of time on the ground in weedy fields looking for seeds. When they are breeding and singing their songs, they love to pose in the open and seem to put everything they have into their love song. We have nine buntings in the Americas and they beat the other buntings of the world hands down for color. Oftentimes, but not always, they will have a mix of blues, greens, yellows or reds. In this report we will take a look at six of our gorgeous buntings.

Years ago when I first starting birding, I was working in a small country school and in order to get a summer pay check, I had to travel down to Athens, Texas in east Texas at Lone Star Camp and work with the kids at summer camp. Actually, it proved to be an open door to an exciting hobby. My first summer there, I was a counselor and slept in the same tent with six or seven kids. Some drawbacks there! Back then, I had no idea there were even fifty different birds in the entire world. At the time, it seemed all of the other teachers who were in the same boat as I was had a specialty; one knew all about boating, another knew canoeing, another swimming and others knew something about nature. It was then I asked myself, "What do you know?" The camp had a pair of cheap Tasco Binoculars and I decided to borrow them and learn something about the birds. One afternoon, I was looking for birds and out back along an open field, I stood transfixed as I watched a Painted Bunting sang its heart out. "No, there can not be a bird that beautiful!" I said to myself. I was transfixed as I watched that incredible bird: a mix of red, green, blue and yellow-olive as it poured out a love song which would rival anything from 'Romeo and Juliet'! I was catapulted into a study of the birds that has taken me to many distant places revealing as we went, the wonderful world of the birds. Looking back at that afternoon at Lone Star Camp, it was a turning point that got me started into birding.

Another bunting that we have here in the Americas is the Varied Bunting, another one of those incredible mixes of colors. I watched one just this week here in Arizona as it seemed to shake with sheer joy at the thought of sharing life with a female bunting. At first glance the Varied Bunting can appear to be all black but look closer. Suddenly, you will see the red nape, the blue rump, a mix of blue and brown all neatly arranged into an incredible bird. The Varied Bunting is uncommon and local in dense mesquite and cactus along the desert washes here in Arizona. Up in North Dakota where my wife and I lived for several years, we could always locate the Lazuli Buntings out in the western part of the state. Stunning birds with blues and cinnamon mixed and the male sporting a pair of white wing bars. As is true with many male buntings, the male is the more colorful. Sometimes, the Lazuli will interbreed with the Indigo Bunting which inhabits pretty much the eastern half or so of the US. The Indigo is a bright blue

and is sometimes confused with the sparrows. Again the female is gray-brown to cinnamon. and she will be listening for the high sharp warble of the male who sometimes likes to sing from high in the trees.

A couple of other buntings we will mention are the Lark Bunting and the Snow Bunting. The Lark Bunting is a stocky, large-headed bird with the male being black with white wing bars while the female has more brown with a lot of bold streaks on its body. Again the bill is typical of the seed-eating buntings, stout and stubby. Our last bunting is the Snow Bunting which is larger than most sparrows and has the typical bunting bill. It nests in the far north of North America from the eastern parts of Canada all the way to the west in Alaska. The males during breeding are essentially white with a black back while the female has less black and white than does the male and has more cinnamon color to its body. Be thankful for the beauty of the buntings! They enrich our world.

Wayne Easley/written on June 15, 2023 in Sierra Vista, Arizona!

PLEASE USE PICTURES ONLY FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES. THANK YOU!



bunting, varied, box canyon, az., june of 2023 R3 - Photo by Wayne Easley



bunting lazuli near bowman, nd., spring of 2022 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley



sparrow, five-striped singing in octotillo in box canyon, arizona on may 31, 2023 R3 - Photo by Wayne Easley



bunting, snow, alaska, 6-30-09 R3 - Photo by Wayne Easley



bunting, snow north dakota, nov., 11, 2011 R3 (1) - Photo by Wayne Easley



bunting, indigo, near harvey, nd., april of 2011 R3 - Photo by Wayne Easley



Castaway In Paradise

Photos by Hank Arnold

I spent the weekend flying the drone over several rookery islands for the annual

Texas Colonial Waterbird Society Survey, and now begins the process of getting the images ready to count, then actually counting every bird.

I'm expecting something around 40,000 birds total for the weekend.

At the end of my last flight yesterday, when the pressure of weeks of preparation was off, Tim Wilkinson took pity on me for being around so many birds without being able to take any horizontal pictures, so he took a scenic route home.

It was the back side of one of the islands we had flown earlier in the day.

As we were idling close by, in "Sightseeing Mode", I heard from some voice behind me utter those words you never want to hear in marine context...

"Uh oh!"

This pronouncement was made pretty much at the same time as our voyage turned from "idling in a cognizant direction" to "drifting". I didn't hear anything that sounded like rushing water, and the captain wasn't going over lifeboat stations (in 2 feet of water), so we just started a very gentle spin as we quietly ghosted downwind...

Towards the rookery

Yup

Somebody up there likes me, because as we very slowly approached the beach, aside from some repair noises back aft, there was no sound save the clicking of my camera, and the usual chaotic din of a packed rookery.

We finally ran aground right next to the beach, and I was in heaven.

If you have to experience what the Coast Guard calls a "Steering Casualty", but your camera still works just fine, doing it just upwind of a nesting island is the place to do it.

If the local Audubon Warden was anywhere nearby, he'd come rushing over with harsh words for us being so close to the island.

But it was the local Audubon Warden that was fiddling around in the stern.

I mean...

That's like right up there to with an absolution from the Pope in terms of "Get Out Of Jail Free".

There had to be 15 different species of birds within a few yards of me, all going about their normal rookery business.



Photo by Hank Arnold

Your feeders...



Photo by Hank Arnold

A few minutes later, when the voice in the stern announced the problem was fixed, I asked if he couldn't please break it again.

Several of the species are of a flavor I rarely ever see...



Photo by Hank Arnold

Your seekers...



Photo by Hank Arnold

Not only rare (to me) birds, but rare birds doing rare things...

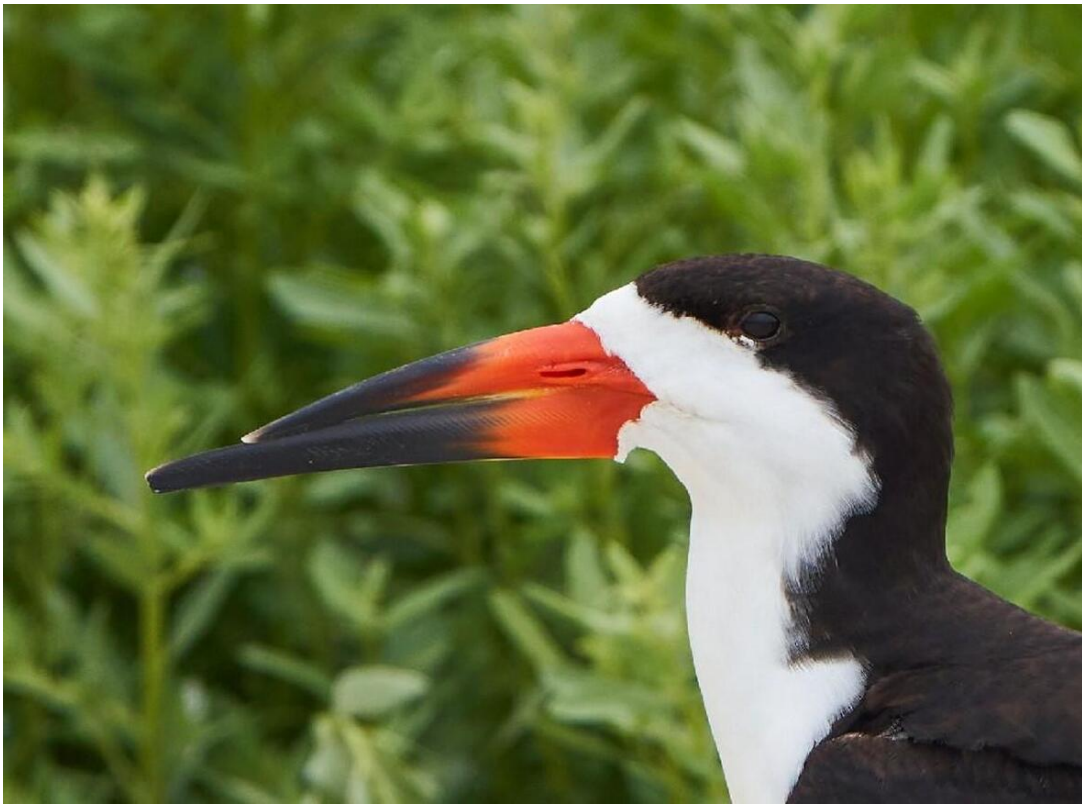


Least tern - Photo by Hank Arnold

Now folks, I submit that you might be looking at the best picture of a Gull-Billed Tern, in flight, carrying Godzilla that has ever been taken, ANYWHERE.

If we hadn't fixed the steering problem I might have pictures of some chick trying to knock that monster back.

For our learning section today, look at how formidable a Black Skimmer bill is from the side...



Skimmer - Photo by Hank Arnold

Then from head-on...



Skimmer - Photo by Hank Arnold

It's a good thing I don't read Skimmer lips because I don't think he was saying

nice things to me.

The funniest part of yesterday's show was when this White Ibis, that I'm pretty sure had a nest in a nearby bush, landed a little short and ended up in the middle of the Terns and Skimmers....



Photo by Hank Arnold

They weren't saying nice things to him, either, as he pranced quickly towards his appointed bush, probably saying "Scuse ME!" with every careful step.

For today's pop quiz, tell me what is special about this picture...



Photo by Hank Arnold

The answer is in the link...

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20230521-LavacaChocolate-Bays/>

We have our own boat, now, so maybe I'll go upwind again soon and accidentally break something again.

30 Seconds Over Rockport

Photos by Hank Arnold

On Saturday we went with Monica's grandkids down to the beach park.

Being a beautiful day on Memorial Day weekend, it was packed with more cars and more humans than I've ever seen before. They were dumb humans, though, because they were packed along the east beach, but almost nobody was along the west beach, where the birds are.

The birds nesting on the islands in Little Bay took it all in stride, with frequent trips through the human mayhem for baby food...



Photo by Hank Arnold

There was the usual spread of beautiful birds flying over...



Photo by Hank Arnold

But for me, this was a very rare treat...



Photo by Hank Arnold

That's a vintage B-25 in town for a Memorial Day show, and it flew right over where I was sitting.

For those of you that don't remember, it was B-25's that took off from the carrier Hornet a few weeks after Pearl Harbor, under the command of Col Jimmy Doolittle, that bombed Tokyo, giving us the book and movie "30 Seconds Over Tokyo".

Quite a treat for us history buffs.

There were quite a few fresh-water pools around from all our recent rain, and lots of bathing by the locals...

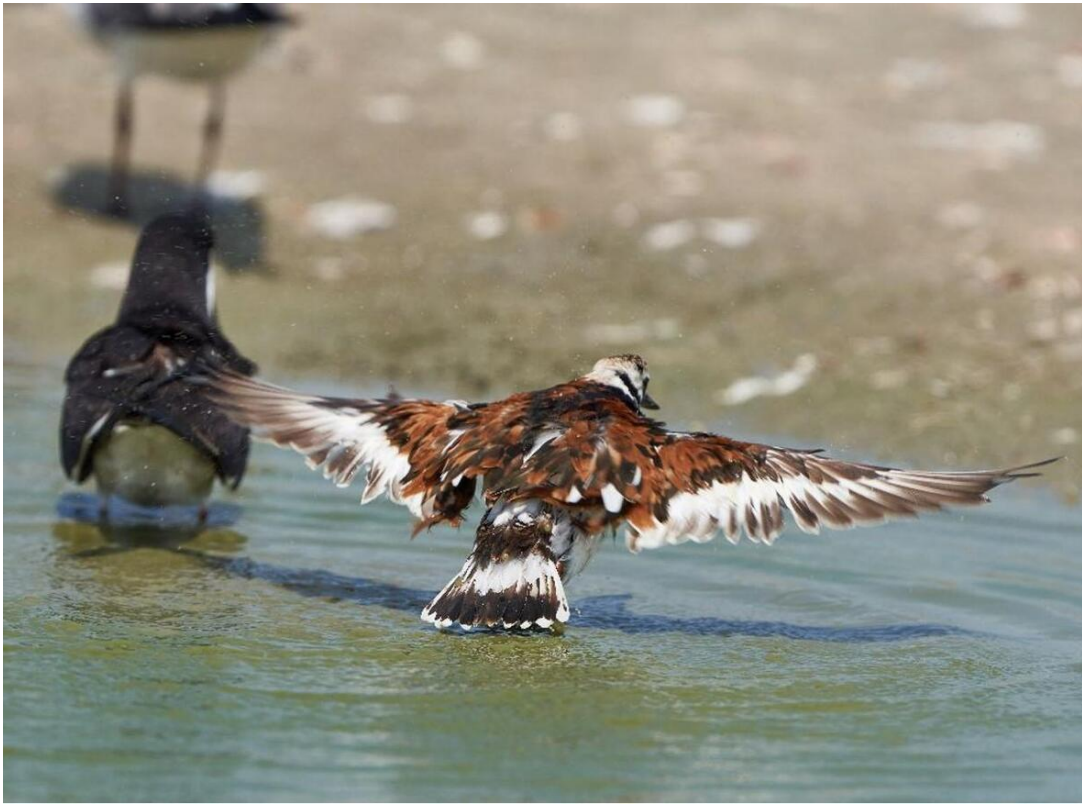


Photo by Hank Arnold

After the beach Park, we stopped off on the way home at Bent Oaks, where a crop of Great Blue Heron chicks are starting to get some flight feathers filling out...



Photo by Hank Arnold

here was a gentle breeze flowing across the tops of the trees, and significant wing testing...



Photo by Hank Arnold

At one point, this one actually lifted into the breeze...



White Ibis requesting a refueling... - Photo by Hank Arnold

It scared the heck out of him, and he immediately dropped back down into the nest.

Pretty soon he'll be a pilot

But not as famous as Jimmy Doolittle

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20230528-Rockport-Beach-Park/>

Pretty In Pink

Photos by Hank Arnold

My years-long request to Upper Management to purchase a boat for birding and drone flight ops was finally approved...



(photo courtesy of Tommy Moore)

Note the very drone-able huge flat foredeck.

We put it in the water for the first time yesterday in Little Bay with the help of Capt Moore, and I got right to work...



Black Chinned Hummingbird - Photo by Hank Arnold

There are two islands in Little Bay, both of them are VERY popular nesting sites for many species of birds. Several of these species are of great concern by environmental professionals. These islands represent one of the major nesting sites along the entire Texas coast for Reddish Egrets and White Morph Reddish Egrets...



Photo by Hank Arnold

And have the most nesting pairs of any other site along the coast for Tri-Colored Herons.



Photo by Hank Arnold

Yesterday for our maiden voyage we were able to witness a larger than normal group of Roseate Spoonbills on the South Island...



Photo by Hank Arnold

They don't appear to be nesting as much as bathing in the heat...



Roseate Spoonbills - Photo by Hank Arnold

The group contains quite a few first year juveniles, which do what most juveniles do...



Spoonbills, roseate - Photo by Hank Arnold

Note the adult sticking its head in from the upper right trying to referee the dispute

Since we didn't see any nests on the South Island, I assume those are just visiting and might pass on through.

Speaking of passing on through, although I have some idea of what this bird is up to (in-flight pooping), I have no concept of what that appendage is he's doing it from...



Roseate Spoonbill - Photo by Hank Arnold

At this point in the season, there are very few chicks large enough to stick their heads up to be seen or photographed. Some of this year's White Ibis chicks are old enough to climb up on top of the cactus to watch for incoming food...



Photo by Hank Arnold

Soon there will be chicks of all shapes and sizes running, jumping and crashing all over both islands.

The Great Blue Herons, as always, got a jump on the whole show by starting their first clutch in March, and in some cases even February, so they have some full size monsters, each armed with a Weapon Of Mass Destruction that they now know how to use to get fed...



Photo by Hank Arnold

As I understand, they hope to get two clutches in each year, and Ray tells me some years they can manage 3.

Soon the island will be covered in Great Blue Juveniles that have been run out of the nest. They wander forlornly about, waiting to be fed, but pretty soon get the picture and head out into the world to do some stabbing of their own.

Although I can see some Reddish Egrets chicks looking down from the drone, I didn't see any yesterday from the boat. It looks from this adult flying out for a to-go order that he's already been clapped some by chicks along the base of his bill..



Reddish egret - Photo by Hank Arnold

It will be much worse before the little parent abusers are gone.

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20230518-Little-Bay/>

If you've ever wanted to see the beauty of nesting chaos, now is the time to come visit the Arnold's.

When Tommy saw these pictures last night he said he was going to start taking his nesting tours into Little Bay.

If that happens, I might need some new boating equipment so he doesn't figure out I'm cheating him of paying customers...



Chick City

Photos by Hank Arnold

I went to visit Ray on Monday, and he's still doing pretty good. He can't see, he can't hear, and he can't move around, but even with all that he's pretty sharp and quizzed me at length about nesting counts for this year.

On the way home I stopped off at Indian Point, where I saw a Reddish dancing in the shallow water



Reddish egret - Photo by Hank Arnold

Can't pass that up.

Then I drove through the Rockport Beach Park for few minutes.

It was quite a ways off from the beach without a boat, but the entire north end of the island is covered with this year's juveniles, still waiting to be fed...



Photo by Hank Arnold

At this point the parents want them to learn to fly and feed themselves, so I think they cut down on the feeding to encourage developments.

The islands in Little Bay are great for nesting, as there are no dogs, cats, coyotes, or wandering humans. Little Bay is like a protective moat around their castle.

Crossing that moat is a requirement for every chick.

The first of this years chicks that I know of that has crossed over from the island was this White Ibis juvenile...



Photo by Hank Arnold

He looks a little scruffy, but he was doing all the right things to find food along the shore. He was turning over shells and rocks, looking at what jumps out from underneath. They don't "toss swallow" like herons or egrets, which makes me think they have a one-way conveyor belt tongue system.

I'll bet he does fine.

Eventually he'll find out what that beak is specialized for. It's enough to make a Texas Oilman jealous.

Soon there will be hundreds of chicks crossing over, spread across 5 or 6 species.

There are 30 or 40 obvious Skimmer "scrapes" with parents shielding young from the devastating sun and heat...



Photo by Hank Arnold

The adults keep their wings spread to block out the sun, but at an angle that directs the breeze downwards over the shrouded fluff balls.

Because the heat was causing a shimmer of the light, its hard to tell from the pictures, but most families seem to have at least 3 chicks, and one has what appear to be 4.

I got this picture of an adult Tri-Colored Heron flying over with enough detail to be able to study the kinds and colors of feathers that make up a wing...



Photo by Hank Arnold

Here are the rest of the pictures from Monday...

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20230620-Rockport/>

Then today I went back over to the park again for a while, then over to the place where the Least Terns are nesting.

Here is that same nest from last week with the "shift change" image sequence...



Photo by Hank Arnold

Still no visible chicks. I assume there are eggs still under there.

He's not squawking, by the way, he's breathing from his mouth because of the heat.

Next to that open area there is a small pond with a little water, and if you recall last week I took some pictures of some adult Black-Necked Stilts that appeared to be nesting in the grass.

Yup...



Photo by Hank Arnold

These two were out running around today, with nervous parents trying to herd them back into the protection of the grass.

Trying unsuccessfully

These guys are just a bundle of cute...



Photo by Hank Arnold

Never seen that before

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20230620-Rockport-II/>



Big Stone Lodge - Dennis Johnston Park

709 Riley Fuzzel Road

PWWS meetings are held at the Big Stone Lodge at the new Dennis Johnston County

Park at 709 Riley Fuzzel Road.

The directions to get there are much the same as to the Nature Center. Aldine-Westfield turns into Riley Fuzzel Road just northeast of Spring so there are several ways to get there.

1. Take the Rayford/Sawdust exit and go east on Rayford Rd. At Grand Parkway (99), turn right on the Grand Parkway frontage road. Go 2 miles (staying on the frontage road) watching for the Johnston Park sign on your right just before you get to the Hardy Toll Road overpass; or,
2. Take Louetta Road east from I45 to where it deadends into Aldine-Westfield. Turn left on Aldine-Westfield until it deadends into Riley Fuzzel Road. Turn right onto Riley Fuzzel Road and go only 0.5 miles to the park entrance on your left just after passing under Hardy Toll Road; or,
3. Take Aldine-Westfield north from Mercer Arboretum until it deadends into Riley Fuzzel Road. Turn right onto Riley Fuzzel Road and go only 0.5 miles to the park entrance on your left just after passing under Hardy Toll Road.

Piney Woods Wildlife Membership Form		
Last Name(s):		First Name of Member(s):
Street Address:	City:	State and Zip:
Home Phone No:	Work Phone No:	Email Address(s):
Pine Warbler will be delivered by E-mail Only		
Annual Membership Fee \$15.00* Additional Contribution \$ _____ Total \$ _____		Mail this form and check made payable to PWWS to: Piney Woods Wildlife Society P.O. Box 189 Spring, TX 77383-0189
*Per Household – Includes <i>The Pine Warbler</i> newsletter New _____ Renewal _____ Rejoining _____		

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The Pine Warbler is published monthly, September through May, by the Piney Woods Wildlife Society, Inc.

For membership information write to us at P.O. Box 189, Spring, Texas 77383-0189. Annual Dues :\$15.00 per household.

Please submit any articles you'd like considered for the PWWS Newsletter. The Pine Warbler, to our President, Kathy Coward, justforthebirds@sbcglobal.net or Diane Wedgeworth, Editor, milanodi@yahoo.com

Please send all new address changes and any corrections to cdmoore3@gmail.com (Claire Moore) and add PWWS to the subject line.
Thank you.



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