

# The Pine Warbler



## Piney Woods Wildlife Society November Program "Painting Heron Sculptures to Promote Conservation"

By Doug Hiser



*Doug Hiser painting a Heron sculpture for charity.*

For the Piney Woods November program, local wildlife artist, Doug Hiser, will give a presentation entitled "Painting Heron Sculptures to Promote Conservation" on Tuesday Nov 14th at 6:30 p.m., social time begins at 6 p.m.

To promote conservation of the Dickinson Bayou and create a birding destination for the incredible diversity of the piney woods and brackish water of the bayou from alligators to herons and egrets, Doug Hiser along with members

of the Dickinson Art Guild, created the Dickinson Heron Project. Doug Hiser explains his process from first sketch to five foot tall heron sculptures that grace the town along its main streets and along the waterway of the bayou. Doug has experience in these types of projects from the turtle sculptures in Galveston, the tall boot sculptures in Wimberley and at the Houston Rodeo, to the Mermaids in San Marcos. He also works closely with Houston Audubon, The Bird Conservancy, Raptor Center, and the national wildlife refuges, painting murals. His website is <http://doughiser.com/>

Doug Hiser grew up in Santa Fe, Texas, chasing snakes and turtles and any other animal he could catch. He was so interested in nature he collected books on all the animal species of the world and read them over and over to learn about them. He began painting and drawing them and hiking across the world to inspire others to become conservationists and to love the wild world. As a muralist he donates painting to organizations like the Audubon Society, Cheetah Conservation Society, Owl conservation, National Wildlife Refuges, and many more.

Doug Hiser is a signature member of Artist for Conservation, the top Wildlife Artists from 30 countries, is an author of 25 books, including Amazon bestsellers The Honey Bee Girl, Montana Mist, Ten Secrets of Love and the 2020 novel Midnight Jungle.

He travels the globe, from Africa to Australia, in search of the wild beasts that he paints. Teaching High School Arts, after years of research, he has developed an art history program the Amazon book, Teaching Art History in the HS Classroom.

The November PWWS program for PWWS will be only in-person and takes place on Tuesday, Nov 14th, at 6:30 p.m. (snacks & social time at 6:00 p.m.) at Dennis Johnston's Big Stone Lodge. 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



*Doug Hiser Painting Brazoria Mural.*





*Doug Hiser and Brazoria Mural.*



*Doug Hiser and Owl.*





*Doug and Gay Hiser Traveling in Africa.*

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## **Note from PWWS President**

We only have 2 more months to find volunteers for the leadership of the PWWS so the group can continue. I have had one brave soul who may take our Treasurer position but we still need a President, Secretary and Program Director. The program director can set the presenters for the year, then not much work after that. I know we also have people that will help with suggestions. Maybe two of you who are friends would have a joint Presidency, make it easier for both of you.

Call me, email me or text me and I will be happy to talk to you about these positions.

Kathy, Your President  
JustForTheBirds@sbcglobal.net  
(832) 491-3592

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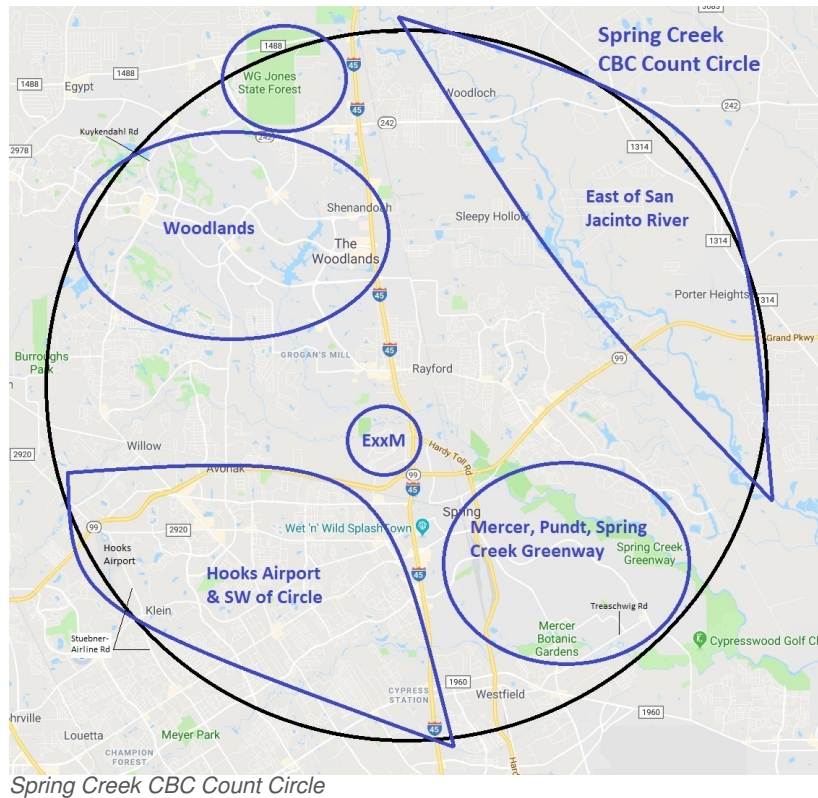


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**SAVE THE DATE! Saturday, December 16th, 2023**

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](mailto:cdmoore3i@gmail.com)) if you can help out in either capacity.

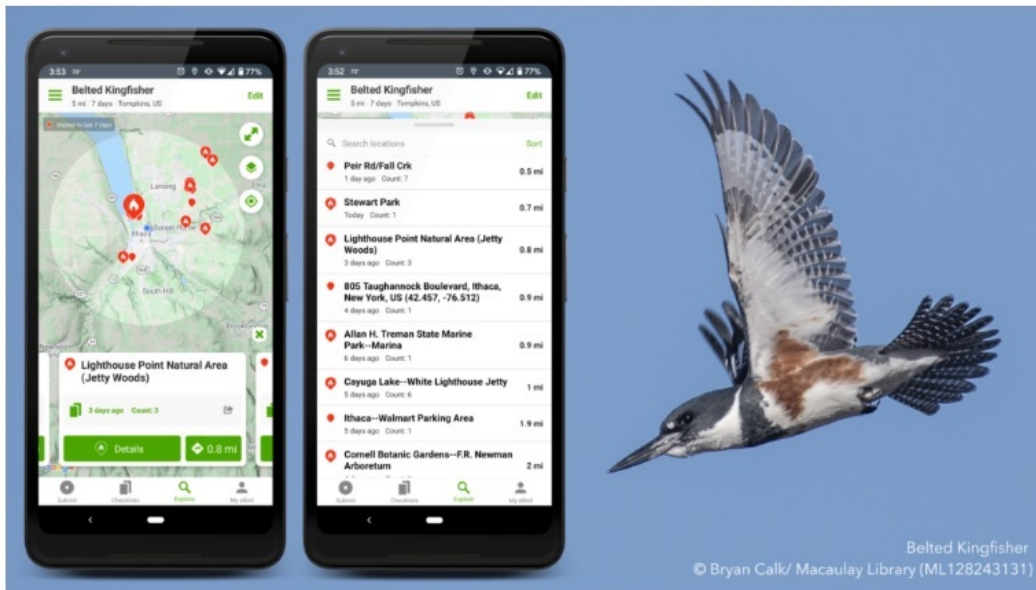
FYI, we are not planning on having a "count dinner" this year, but that should return next year in 2024.

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## 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!





## LOVE IS IN THE AIR

By Cheryl Conley, Lake Creek Nature Preserve Board of Directors



Fawn - Photo by Cheryl Conley

Yep, it's that time of year. White-tailed bucks are checking out the girls. They

aren't very particular, however, and certainly aren't faithful to only one doe. Bucks mate with a number of does and there's only a small percentage of males that mate with most of the females.

Generally speaking, a doe will give birth for the first time at about two years old. White-tailed does go into heat multiple times during the breeding season and the heat period lasts 24 hours. If the doe doesn't conceive during a heat period, she'll go into another heat period 28 days later. Once pregnant, the gestation period is about 200 days and she won't show any signs of pregnancy until the third trimester. Her belly will be enlarged, she cleans her fur frequently and she appears to be on high alert. It's not uncommon to see several does traveling together in groups for safety. Once it's time to give birth, Mom will look for an area of tall grass or an area with heavy vegetation so the fawn will be well hidden. Most does give birth to twins but they can give birth to 1, 2, 3 or even 4 fawns.

The birthing process is similar to many other mammals. The doe will lie on her side and once the baby is partially out, she will stand up. Once the baby is completely out, it will have the first feeding. She cleans the baby which removes any traces of her scent. This leaves the baby nearly scentless which protects it from predators. The baby can usually stand within 20 minutes of birth at which time Mom will move it to another vegetated area.

For the first few weeks, the baby is fragile and it's difficult to keep up with the mom so it doesn't even try. I don't know how she does it but somehow Mom "tells" the babies to stay put until she gets back. She then heads out to forage. She can be gone for several hours and will occasionally go back to nurse if the coast is clear. This is when people with good intentions "kidnap" fawns thinking they are helping them. The best thing to do if you find a fawn is to observe from a distance. In the majority of cases, the mom will return to her baby. If a fawn should stray from the spot where the mom "parked" it, the fawn is innately trained to go back to the spot where the doe last left it.

At about a month of age, the fawn is strong enough to run and keep up with Mom. They are still considered fawns until they're a year old and then they are referred to as yearlings. Fawns and yearlings are at the greatest risk from predators and the mortality rate is about 40%.

During the second year of life, the males will be driven off by the mother prior to mating season to avoid inbreeding. Females will leave after 2 years or they may choose to stay around and form a family group.

I'm fortunate to live on an acreage in the 'burbs where there are numerous



deer. Every spring I look forward to seeing the fawns and watching them run as fast as their little legs will carry them trying to keep up with Mom. Simply adorable.

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## Photos by Liz Van Der Laag



*Near Banff Canada - a special day with my kid brothers. - Photo by Liz Van Der Laag*





*Photo by Liz Van Der Laag*



*Photo by Liz Van Der Laag*





*Photo by Liz Van Der Laag*



*Snowy Egret - Photo by Liz Van Der Laag*





*Love our birds. Sandhill cranes at home this morning, 10-31-2023, and snowy egret at the beach. Florida - Photo by Liz Van Der Laag*

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**From our friends at the National Butterfly Center -  
Mission, Texas**





*Texas Powdered Skipper - Photo credit to National Butterfly Center 10-17-23*



*Theona Checkerspot - Photo credit to National Butterfly Center*





*Fatal metalmark - Photo credit to National Butterfly Center*



*Ceranus Blue - Photo credit to National Butterfly Center*





Four of the five Monarch caterpillars we found feeding on a Zizotes milkweed (native species) earlier this week. There is a theory that migrating Monarchs live long enough to migrate south, overwinter in Mexico and start the migration north because they're in a reproductive diapause. Year after year, we find enough Monarch caterpillars in October and November to reject this theory, especially since we have no residential Monarchs, only migrating ones that pass through on the way to Michoacan. - Photo credit to National Butterfly Center

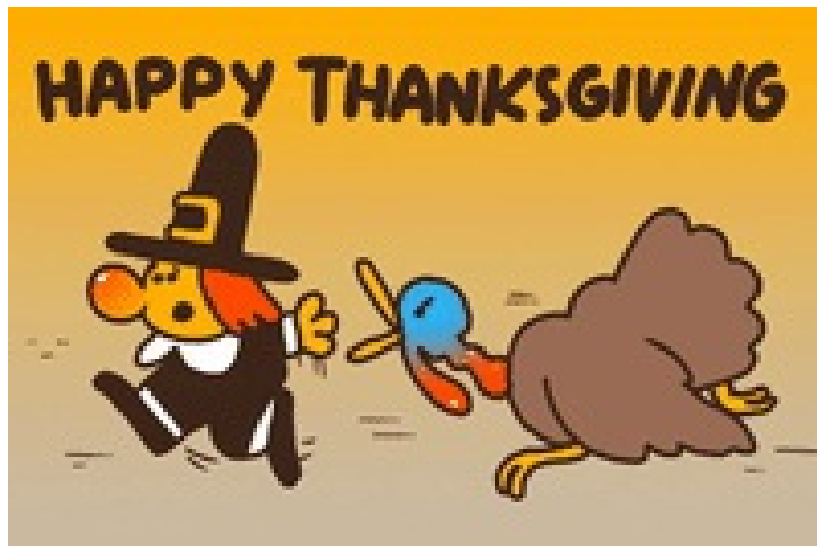


Nashville Warbler - Photo credit to National Butterfly Center



*Red Admiral - Photo Credit to National Butterfly Center*

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**Photos by Randy Scott**





*Randy in Texas*

*Roseate Spoonbill Port Aransas, Texas October, 2023 Texas is blessed to have these birds along the coast. One person told me, "Have you seen the Pink Flamingos at Padre Island?" I said "It is highly unlikely there were flamingoes there, Probably Roseate Spoonbills." These are definitely colorful birds and I am blown away by their beauty each time I go to the coast. Photo by Randy Scott*



*Randy in Texas*

*Northern Shoveler, Port Aransas, Texas - Photo by Randy Scott*





*Randy in Texas*

Conroe, Texas Queen Butterfly We have these beautiful creatures occasionally in the Fall, attracted by this blue flower. This year, this single bug is the only one I have seen. Photo by Randy Scott



*Randy in Texas*

Flock of Red-winged Blackbirds at one of the bird sanctuaries in #portaransastx about two weeks ago. You find these birds in marshy areas with reeds. Their beaks are constructed to "gap", that is, the power of their eating habits is opening their mouth to remove grass clumps, not closing it to break open seeds. Birds are so interesting and diverse. - Photo by Randy Scott



*Starlings in Lubbock last week. They were in small flocks in the Lubbock Lake Landmark National Archeology reserve- Photo by Randy Scott*



*Photo by Randy Scott*





Caterpillar of a Sulfur butterfly on its host, a Candlestick plant that is currently blooming in our backyard. - Photo by Randy Scott



White Morph Reddish Egret Sept 27, 2023 These beautiful birds are so common in fresh and salt water, we sometimes disregard them, especially on the coast. If we are hiking, we often run across one on a creek or any shore where there are fish, and they can scare us when they become frightened about our presence. I was just introduced to the morph of the Reddish Egret in a recent publication and a member of this group. Thanks for the correction. - Photo by Randy Scott



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Photos by Bill Miller





*The Eastern Bluebirds are eating the ripe red seeds out of the magnolia cones. Haven't seen that behavior before. - Photo by Bill Miller*



*Baxter State Park, Millinocket, ME - Photo by Bill Miller*





*Photo by Bill Miller*



*Photo by Bill Miller*





*Photo by Bill Miller*



*Photo by Bill Miller*



*Photo by Bill Miller*

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**Photos by Jim Snyder**





*Great Purple Hairstreak - Photo by Jim Snyder*



*Giant Swallowtail - Photo by Jim Snyder*



Cockrell Butterfly Center - Photo by Jim Snyder





Cockrel Butterfly Center - Photo by Jim Snyder



Cockrel Butterfly Center - Photo by Jim Snyder





*Owl Butterfly - Photo by Jim Snyder*



*Owl Butterfly - Photo by Jim Snyder*





*Heliconius* sp. - Photo by Jim Snyder



*Clearwing (Greta oto)* - Photo by Jim Snyder



*Photo by Jim Snyder*



*Rice Paper (Idea leuconoe) - Photo by Jim Snyder*





*Mexican Longwing (Heliconius hortense) - Photo by Jim Snyder*



*Parides sp. - Photo by Jim Snyder*



*Blue Morpho (Morpho peleides) - Photo by Jim Snyder*

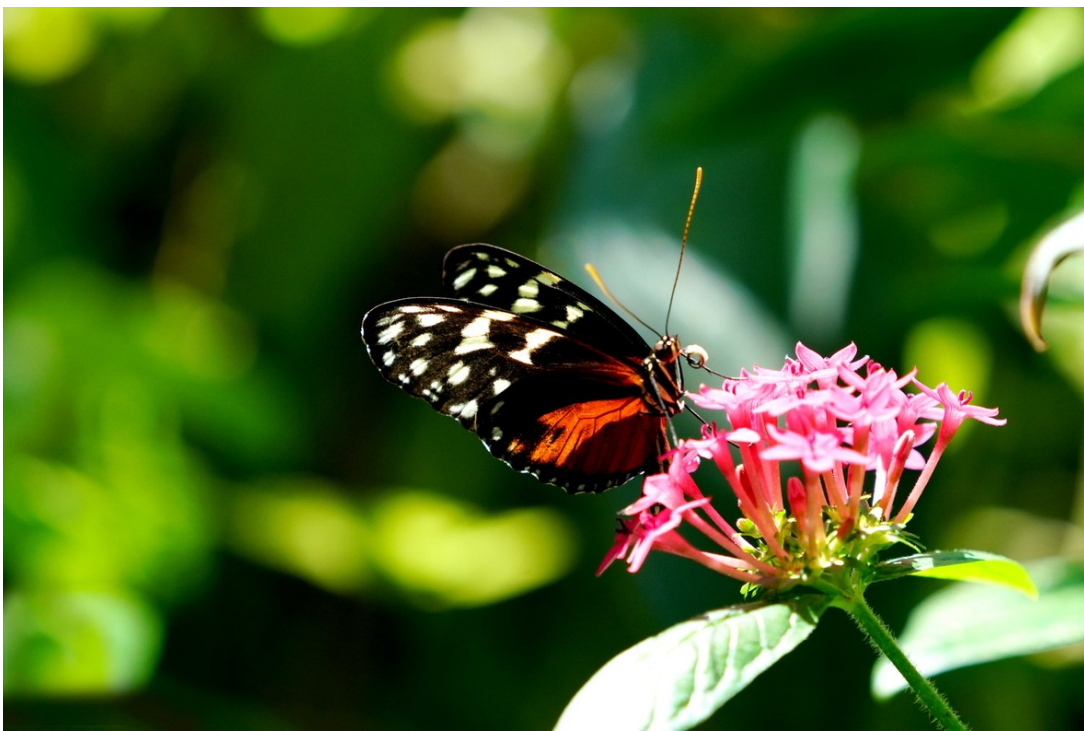


*Photo by Jim Snyder*





*Photo by Jim Snyder*



*Heliconius sp. - Photo by Jim Snyder*



*Photo by Jim Snyder*



*Clearwing sp. - Photo by Jim Snyder*





*Photo by Jim Snyder*



*Iguana Lizard - Photo by Jim Snyder*

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## CREATOR'S CANVAS-PART 2-SPARROWS/MORE NATIVE AMERICAN SPARROWS!

By Wayne Easley





*baird's sparrow, north dakota, july of 2010 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley*

No one seems to know exactly how many species of sparrows there are in the world. The figure runs from around 140-200 species. We do know that there are about 35 species of Native American Sparrows. Identifying sparrows can be difficult because often their ranges overlap and their plumage's are similar. Sometimes, sparrows are lumped together as, "Little Brown Jobs." While

sparrows do not have the brilliance of the cardinals nor the personality of the Black-capped Chickadee, they are some of the more loyal birds to our outdoor feeders. With practice and patience, we can learn to correctly identify the sparrows. In identifying sparrows, one should check the size of the bill, as well as any markings on the head, breast or wings. What colors predominate? The whole thing seems complicated at first but with a bit of strong determination one can learn the sparrows. And it can be a lot of fun as well as helpful to our life lists of birds.

Sparrows are primarily seed-eaters but they will take some insects and berries as well. They have a specialized bone connected to their tongues in order to hold a seed in their mouth. Most of them are quite social but pair up into couples when nesting time rolls around. They are often parasitized by the Brown-headed Cowbird. The female cowbird does not build a nest but will sneak in and often get rid of the sparrow egg, replacing it with its own egg. The sparrow raises the baby cowbird which often is much larger than the adult sparrow foster parent. (see the picture gallery of a Savannah Sparrow raising a very large baby cowbird) The sparrows of the world are in the Passerines, a family of birds that has recently added the juncos to that group. The Dark-eyed Juncos, sometimes called snowbirds, are gray above and white below which means they are around in the wintertime when we have snow on the ground. I hope you will make an effort to get acquainted with our sparrows. The Creator God made them for our pleasure. Enjoy,

Wayne Easley/written on Feb. 5, 2023 in Sierra Vista, Arizona.

PICTURES: CAN BE USED FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES.





*savannah sparrow, singing near harvey, nd., in june of 2010 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley*



*sparrow, savannah with baby cowbird showing size difference, near esmond, nd., in july of 2021 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley*





*sparrow, black-throated near sierra vista, az., jan. 30, 2023 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley*





*sparrow, golden-crowned 7-10-09 place unsure RD - Photo by Wayne Easley*



*sparrow, vesper near harvey, nd., in sept - Photo by Wayne Easley*





*sparrow, vesper near harvey, nd., in sept - Photo by Wayne Easley*



*junco, dark-eyed near harvey, nd. 4-8-09 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley*





*sparrow, leconte's near long lake refuge, nd., june 3, 2012 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley*



sparrow, nelson's shapr-tailed, mackenzie marsh, nd., date unsure RD - Photo by Wayne Easley





*sparrow, fox, jones farm near bowdon, nd., april 15, 2011 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley*



*sparrow, grasshopper at jay clark salyer refuge, nd., june of 2012 RD - Photo by Wayne Easley*

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## **CREATOR'S CANVAS/HUMMINGBIRDS-MASTERS OF FLIGHT!**

**Photo by Wayne Easley**





*coquette, black-crested female at casa rancho, cr., dec. of 2016 R - Photo by Wayne Easley*

The endless rains here in Costa Rica brings out the best in hummingbird flight. Hummingbirds defend with life and limb a patch of flowers or one of their special feeders. When a rival flies by, they tend to fan out their tails in spectacular fashion or dash out in flight to defend their neck of the woods. At times, they can be very aggressive, sometimes attacking even larger birds that are up to no good. Body slams are not unusual but they seldom go so far as to injure one of their rivals, although they do use their beaks and claws to advantage. Hummingbirds seem to take special delight in playing these "war games"! I love to watch them as they dive-bomb each other or flare out their tails in grand fashion. It is as if they are saying, "Better look at me; I am bigger than you think!" And this goes on all day long!

Hummingbirds are masters of flight. They can easily hit thirty miles an hour, but in an aggressive dive they can come close to doubling that speed. They have the least number of feathers of any of the birds and this helps them to be master flyers. They can fly upside down, sideways and are experts at hovering. They use their tails for stabilization and balance and for braking as they twist and turn in their constant battles. Hummingbirds have very fragile feet so they are not able to walk or hop. They can scoot from one side to the other but that is about it. They prefer to fly!

As we have already mentioned, there are times when hummingbirds flare out their tails and assume a threat position. They will also puff out their feathers which seems to be another way of making themselves appear to be bigger than life. On sunny days, it is not unusual to see hummingbirds sunbathing. This will

help them get rid of bothersome parasites. Unlike some other kinds of bird, hummingbirds enjoy the rains, especially the gentle rains. When it rains like that, they often will break into a rather comical bath making sure that the whole body gets a good scrubbing. They have an oil gland near the base of the tail that helps them keep clean.

Hummingbirds seem to have very good eyesight. When I fill my feeders in the morning, they know exactly what is happening. Hummingbirds feed on sucrose which is the sugar found in flowers. It is thought that hummingbirds can estimate the time it takes for flowers to fill, They follow a circuit in their feeding habits, visiting flowers that are constantly filling with nectar. Not all hummingbirds migrate but those that do generally travel alone. The Rufous Hummingbird is the master migrator, flying from its wintering grounds in Mexico to Alaska in the far Northwest.

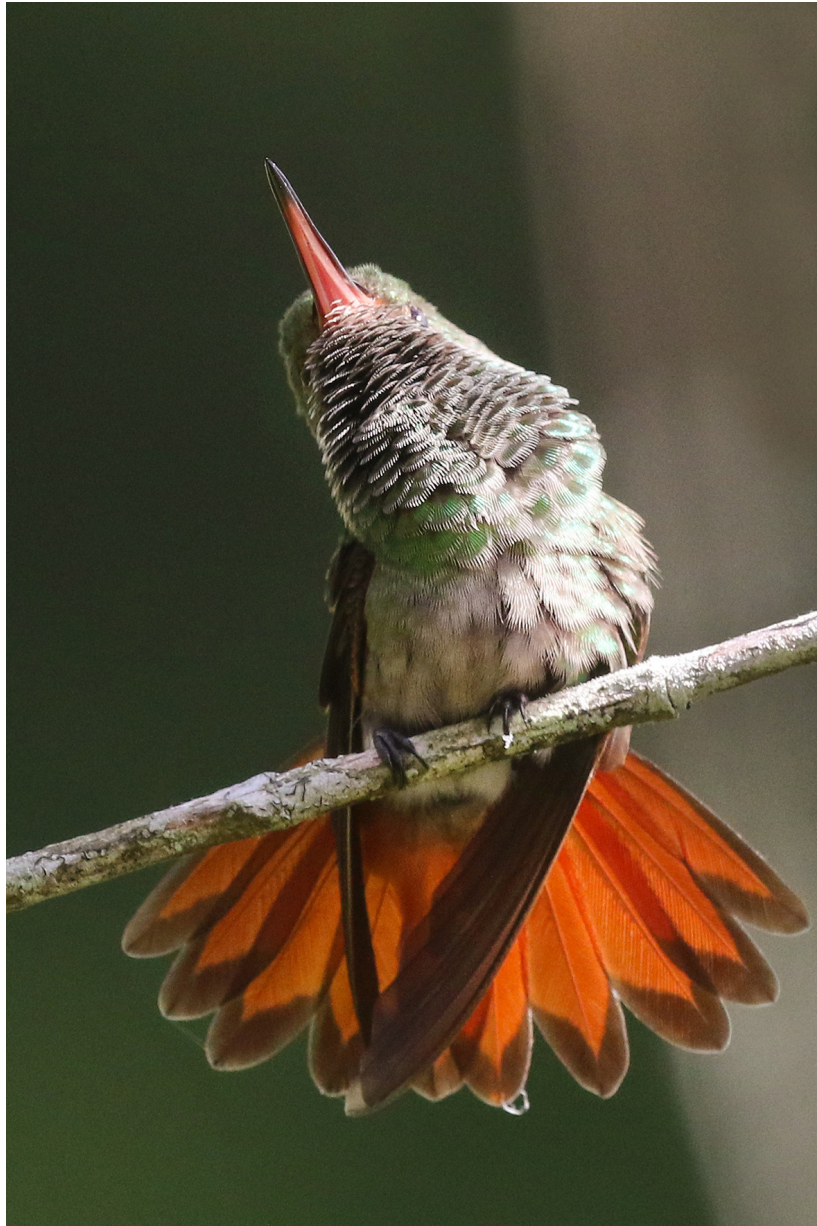
As you can well imagine, hummingbirds are some of my favorite birds. Their dazzling colors and their mastery in the air makes them very special. We should be grateful to the Creator God who made the incredible hummingbirds. Gen. 1: 20 says that God made the birds to fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. What a wonderful gift we have in the hummingbirds!

Wayne Easley/written on June 15, 2019 at Rancho Naturalista, Costa Rica



*mango, green-breasted, casa rancho, cr., oct. 29-16 R - Photo by Wayne Easley*





*hummingbird, rufous-tailed sunbathing in belize date uncertain R - Photo by Wayne Easley*



*hummingbird, white-necked jacobin at casa rancho, cr., june 1-19 R - Photo by Wayne Easley*



*jacobin, white-necked sun-bathing at casa rancho, cr., june 2-19 R - Photo by Wayne Easley*





*jacobin in defensive postion casa rancho, cr., june 1-19 R - Photo by Wayne Easley*



*humminbird, violet sabrewing dec. of 2017 casa rancho, cr., R - Photo by Wayne Easley*

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**Bolivar 17th St. Jetty - Sept. 4, 2023**

**Photos by Paul Gregg**



*Sandwich Tern, Photo by Paul Gregg*

. . .and one photo from Laffite's Cove.

Howdy!

Having experienced some 45 days of over 100 degree heat in our neck of the woods, we finally got out for a day and went to the 17th St. Jetty on the Bolivar Peninsula. I've included a link to the location. The photo that comes up shows the jetty and water on both sides, but that wasn't how it was when we were there on Sept. 4. The left side is the ship channel, but the right side was almost water free with some places where there was mosly puddles and vegetation, but mostly the birds there were walking in mud!

We had driven to Winnie, then down to the coast and headed toward the jetty at Bolivar. We parked the car, and started walking on the jetty which has the first maybe 400 yards very nicely concreted for a walkway. After that, one must be careful if you go farther. There were people fishing on the west side where the ship channel is and we were looking for birds on the inward side. A few days prior to our arrival, 5 American Flamingos were seen in the area and we saw awesome photographs of the 3 adults and 2 immature ones. AND. . we got there a day late and they were gone. Some thought the Florida hurricane had driven them from Florida, Cuba, or maybe the Yucatan, but they didn't leave a note about where they came from.

But the visit wasn't a bust, as there were a good variety of birds to photograph. The Sandwich Tern gave me a nice (BIF) bird in flight shot. It looks like it has



fishing line hanging from its mouth and I hope it wasn't. The Whimbrel was just strolling along, walking in the mud. The Reddish Egret appeared to be looking for small fish that had been caught in one of the long puddles. The Willet was pecking at something that was thrown in the mud. It looked like someone had been using a chicken leg and thigh to catch crabs and had thrown it away. The Black Skimmer did a fly-by and I got a decent shot. After we left, we got in a long (about 45 minutes) line waiting for the Bolivar Ferry to take us to the Galveston side and way off in the distance we saw the Cooper's Hawk on a tall pole. It took off and I was ready for another BIF shot. The shot is the heaviest cropped photo of the group.

When I was downloading and processing the photos, I was happy to see the Western Sandpiper rapidly foraging and I got a few shots in as it passed a discarded Shakespeare fishing reel. Those photos yielded what is called "SCALE" and you can now see how tiny that particular sandpiper is. Pretty cool, if I do say so.

The last bird of the day was the Flycatcher at Laffite's Cove. We went there to see if any fall migrants were present. The only bird we saw that I was able to photograph was the flycatcher. I asked for help identifying it and the consensus was it is a Least Flycatcher. There's a presentation coming up where the author of a flycatcher ID book will discuss identifying them, and for now I'll agree with others that it is a Least Flycatcher.

Staying home out of the heat was rewarded by our backyard feeders being discovered by Baltimore Orioles and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have been having their wars around our hummer feeders; but I'll save those photos for another email, maybe in a few days.

Bolivar North Jetty:

<https://www.bolivarpeninsulatexas.com/Activities/Enjoy-Bolivar-Outdoors/North-Jetties>

Enjoy,

Paul Gregg, SMSGT, USAF (Ret.)

Gen. 1:20: And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.



*Whimbrel - Photo by Paul Gregg*



*Reddish Egret - Photo by Paul Gregg*





*Western Sandpiper and Reel - Photo by Paul Gregg*

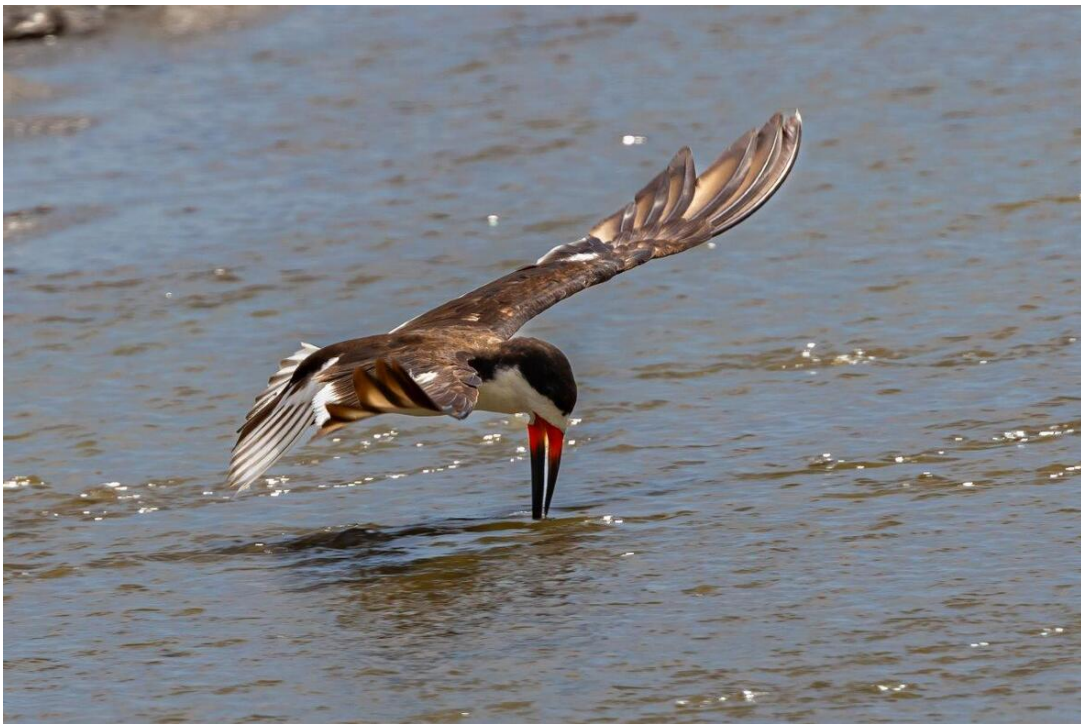


*Western Sandpiper and Reel - Photo by Paul Gregg*





*Willet - Photo by Paul Gregg*



*Black Skimmer - Photo by Paul Gregg*





*Coopers Hawk - Photo by Paul Gregg*



*Flycatcher - Photo by Paul Gregg*

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**Sabine Woods - April 16, 2023**

**Photos by Paul Gregg**



*Eastern Kingbird - Photo by Paul Gregg*

Beat the Heat! - (go back to April!)

I received an email from a member of “Paul’s Peeps” and they asked if I had any more photos from the spring migration to share. WELL. . . . . YES! Lately, with the summer heat in the Houston area, I’ve stayed pretty much home and have taken a few photos of backyard birds. I’ve told folks over the years that my middle name is “Procrastination” and when summer hits, I live up to my adopted middle name. In thinking about returning to April 16, and the Sabine Woods visit, I’m reminded how much cooler it was back then.

The migrating birds were at the woods in good numbers, and good varieties. Warblers, buntings, flycatchers, grosbeaks, and others were seen, counted, and photographed. Eastern Kingbirds were perching high in the mulberry tree on the east side of the woods. The Green Heron stalked prey at the west side of the pond. The Acadian Flycatcher and Eastern Wood Pewee had a tendency to stay protected under the canopy of the woods as they perched on lower branches and watched for insects to appear within their range. The Blue Grosbeak gave me a nice pose at the edge of the woods. Indigo Buntings (an immature male and a female) were posing nicely. The Prothonotary Warbler was at the base of a weeping willow tree near the northwest area just out of the woods and into the other pond area. There were more Blackburnian Warblers than I have ever personally counted in previous years and I think in most of my photos of them they are looking up, maybe spying a worm or insect on a twig. The Northern Parula gave me a number of poses and I included two of my favorites.



I think I have a couple more visits back in spring that I haven't finished processing yet. I hope you don't mind maybe a couple more "retro" visits. I'll see if I can step away from my middle name for a while and get another email out to you in a few days. Try to stay cool!

Enjoy!

Paul Gregg, SMSGT, USAF (Ret.)

Gen. 1:20: And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.



*Northern Parula - Photo by Paul Gregg*



*Northern Parula - Photo by Paul Gregg*



*Blackburnian Warbler - Photo by Paul Gregg*





*Green Heron - Photo by Paul Gregg*



*Acadian Flycatcher - Photo by Paul Gregg*



*Blue Grosbeak - Photo by Paul Gregg*

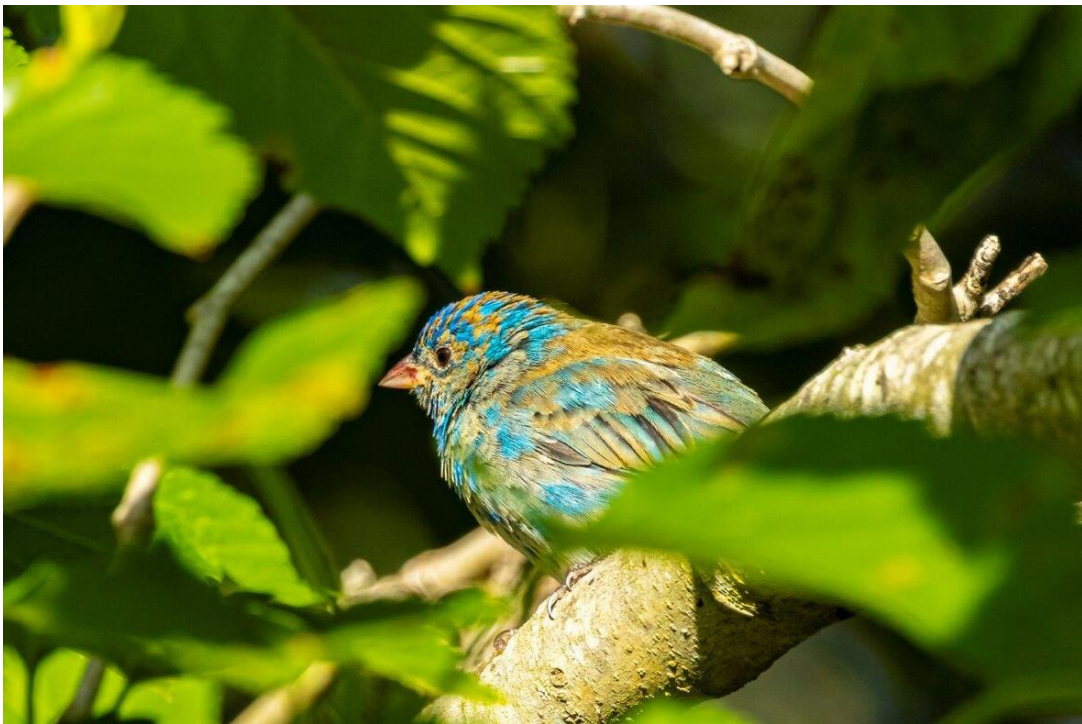


*Eastern Wood Pewee - Photo by Paul Gregg*





*Prothonotary Warbler - Photo by Paul Gregg*



*Indigo Bunting immature male - Photo by Paul Gregg*



*Indigo Bunting female - Photo by Paul Gregg*

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**New Birding Word**

Photos by Hank Arnold





*Pink Flamingos - Photo by Hank Arnold*

We had it on very good advice that two actual pink flamingos had been seen on the far side of Aransas Bay from Rockport.

"Good Advice" being two people sent me actual GPS coordinates, and they matched. That's as good as birding advice gets.

At that point you kind of have to think that several of my friends are telling me I need to get my big lens over there, pronto.

So we clued in our neighbors, Kathy and Lee, dropped everyone's puppies off for play day at Sandy Oaks, loaded up our fancy new boat (remembered to take the big lens) and headed out.

Now, folks...

I'm new at this fancy motor boating thing, but it was absolutely the perfect day.

The sun was still warming things up from the cool morning. There were just enough clouds to make the sky beautiful.

But most importantly, the surface of the water was calm, with a very light breeze causing just a hint of a few ripples.

In my previous life as a sailor, it would just have barely been enough wind to be able to steer, and the only way you would have been able to tell if the boat was moving would have been to look over the side and find something on the

surface to study. If it was moving towards away from the pointy end you were moving. If it stayed with you, not so much.

But in my new life as a fancy motorboater, this is the perfect environment.

The area in the Rockport Beach Park Marina area from the boat ramp to the jetties opening up into Aransas Bay is a "No Wake" zone, which in our boat makes you feel like an F15 pilot on final approach to land behind a Cessna.

Once we cleared the jetties into open water, I nudged the throttle open, and we jumped up out of the water and skittered across the flat surface.

"Skitter" is the new term I have created for myself to explain the aquatic nirvana of flying calmly across the surface of the water at any speed you want, almost like skating on ice.

There is no "skitter" term in the sailing world.

The fastest you ever go in a large sailboat is about 8 miles per hour, and that's only because the wind is blowing 35 miles per hour and you're leaping from the top of one huge wave before crashing into to the next.

Sailing like that is akin to a dog holding his head out the window riding down the highway.

Your jowls are flapping.

This new fancy motor boating thing is growing on me.

And Skitter we did, in significant style.

With the inclusion of the GPS coordinates on our fancy computer display, our skitter op was only about 15 minutes long before we arrived near our destination.

When I backed off on the throttle and the boat sat back down into the water, I couldn't help but think this was like dropping out of warp in Star Trek.

I don't think I said anything about reporting that we were in orbit around our destination planet, but I may be wrong on that.

We slowed down well in advance of the spot we were looking for because I didn't want to scare them, and after about 60 seconds, Nancy reported that our new friends were in sight...





*Pink Flamingos - Photo by Hank Arnold*

It was right about at this point that I realized it would have been better if we visited in the afternoon, because the light was behind them, but I'll do better.

Beautiful birds...

One was holding his leg in a way that seemed funny to us...



*Photo by Hank Arnold*

Jumping ahead a little, I sent some images up the food chain at Audubon to see if we could get anyone that could say if this was an injury and if possible what sexes we might have, and got this back from Richard Gibbons...

"Since the last hurricane went through Florida a few weeks back, several American Flamingo sightings have occurred all over the US. There were three found at Bolivar Flats as a one-hit wonder, some others were found as far as the Mid-Atlantic and Midwest. These are wild birds trying to find their way back south to more tropical climes presumably.

The red joints and odd angles are normal if that was the thinking on the injury. I don't see any injury, but maybe I'm missing something."

What I hadn't noticed until we got home and looked at the pictures was that at one point he kind of straightened out his leg and flexed out his toes...



*Photo by Hank Arnold*

So hopefully this is just normal Flamingo stuff.

No matter what brought them here, they are a beautiful sight, and I hope they get home safely. If they decide to stay, we'll all be better off for it, and there will be significant future "skittering".

We didn't want to stay long enough to alarm them, so after about 10 minutes, we backed off and took stock of the day.



"20 minutes in, and we've accomplished our mission".

At that point we wandered north along the western shore of St. Joe's island, stopping for each group of birds we saw.

Lots of pelicans enjoying the fine weather, including our winter visitors, White Pelicans...



*Photo by Hank Arnold*

We saw Oystercatchers at several stops, and for the first time, I was able to watch them working the shallow water...



*Least tern - Photo by Hank Arnold*

Notice that his head is still wet from just having raised this trophy.

We weren't close enough to be able to tell if those are hermit crabs or actual snails, but I'm thinking hermit crabs.

Since it was my first time, I couldn't tell if they were actually eating anything. I was expecting them to pick up a shell, then walk over to the shore to pick out the contents, but they never did. Either part of the time their heads were underwater they were extracting goodies, or all the shells were empty.

If they were eating, it means the only reason they raised the shells up out of the water was to be able to get a new breath of air without it getting away.

As we made our way back into the marina area, this Osprey was very regally hunting from the top of a flag pole...





*Osprey - Photo by Hank Arnold*

We also saw at least 4 Kingfishers on our tour around the two islands in the park...



*Belted Kingfisher - Photo by Hank Arnold*

Ospreys are always entertaining...



*Photo by Hank Arnold*

Along the shore of the north island there was also a little grebe, possibly a Least, but I couldn't get a good picture of him. We took another lap around the islands, but couldn't find him again.

The reason we had to go all the way around to back up 100 feet was that it's a one-way traffic zone near the boat ramp. This is to keep the summer skiers from killing one another by crashing head on. Even though we were the only boat, Nancy would not allow me to turn around and go back, but instead, we had to go all the way around.

It's kind of like being told to keep within the lines driving through an empty Walmart parking lot at night.

Some of us see less logic in that than others.

You see, I'm not the captain of the fancy new motorboat.

I'm just the Skitterman.

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20231019-Aransas-Bay/>

Some Links from Hank Arnold to view:

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20220812-Rockport-Beach-Park-CBBEP/>

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20230921-Tuttles/>



<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/20231012-Lamar/>

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/POD/20210321-Osprey/>

<https://hmarnold.smugmug.com/POD/20210227-Big-Tree/>



*Photo by Hank Arnold*

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## 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.

<b>Piney Woods Wildlife Membership Form</b>		
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:  <b>Piney Woods Wildlife Society</b> <b>P.O. Box 189</b> <b>Spring, TX 77383-0189</b>
*Per Household – Includes <i>The Pine Warbler</i> newsletter New _____ Renewal _____ Rejoining _____		



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

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Thank you.

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