

Along the salt flats and the marshes of Aransas, Mesquite and San Antonio bays of the Texas Gulf coast wildlife abounds; deer, wild turkey, javelina and some 400 species of waterfowl and song birds are to be seen. Many of the birds are to be found only in this region, others are migrants and accidentals.

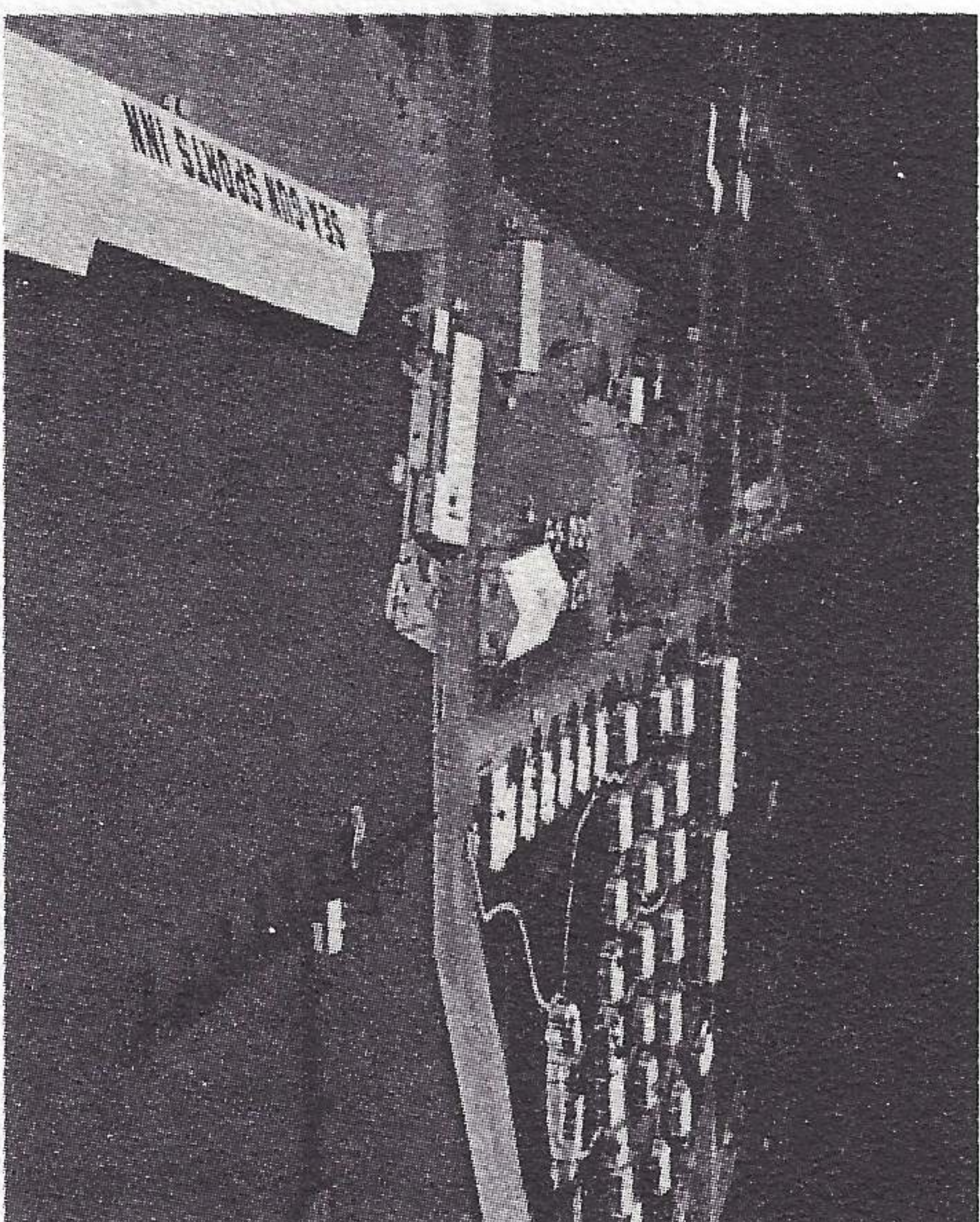
Here the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1937, spreads over more than 47,000 acres on Blackjack peninsula. The area is administered by the Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Department of the Interior. The refuge provides the winter home for the world's only flock of whooping cranes, one of the largest and rarest of North American birds.

The area consists of bays, tidal flats, salt marshes and sandy higher ground broken by long, narrow ponds or swales. Most of the soil is deep sand, covered by running liveoak and sweetbay brush. Numerous small groves of stunted (ming) liveoak and blackjack oak lean permanently away from the Gulf winds along the lower ridges. Lakes and ponds dot the area impounding the rainfall.

The largest list of birds ever tallied in the United States in one day was made in this area — 204 species. At any time during the year impressive checklists can be made. During the fall Canada geese sometimes number 35,000 at the refuge. Pintails, mallards and teal in mixed flocks have reached a known figure of 120,000.

Sandhill cranes winter here in numbers. The caracara is a permanent resident, white-tailed hawks are conspicuous nesting birds and wild turkeys are to be seen during all seasons. During the spring and early summer, the colorful rosate spoonbill feeds along the bayshores and bayous in mixed groups of white ibises, egrets, herons and black-necked stilts.

The nearly extinct whooping cranes commute some 2500 miles between their summer home in Canada and this winter resort in Texas. Their only known nesting ground lies in Wood Buffalo National Park, an 11 million acre wilderness only 400 miles from the Arctic Circle.



The Sea Gun Resort Hotel, member of the National Audubon Society and Texas' only true resort is located in this fabulous area and offers complete service for the birder and naturalist, including facilities for conventions and field expeditions. Official regional checklists are available.

From its marina, regular trips are scheduled into the sanctuaries aboard the motor vessel "Whooping Crane." Every Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday (while the whooping cranes are on the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, usually October 20th through April 10th), this sixty-five foot, diesel powered vessel embarks at 1:30 P.M. for a 3 1/2 to 4 hour run across Aransas bay, past Bludworth Island to the remote areas frequented by the many species.

Write, wire or phone for reservations



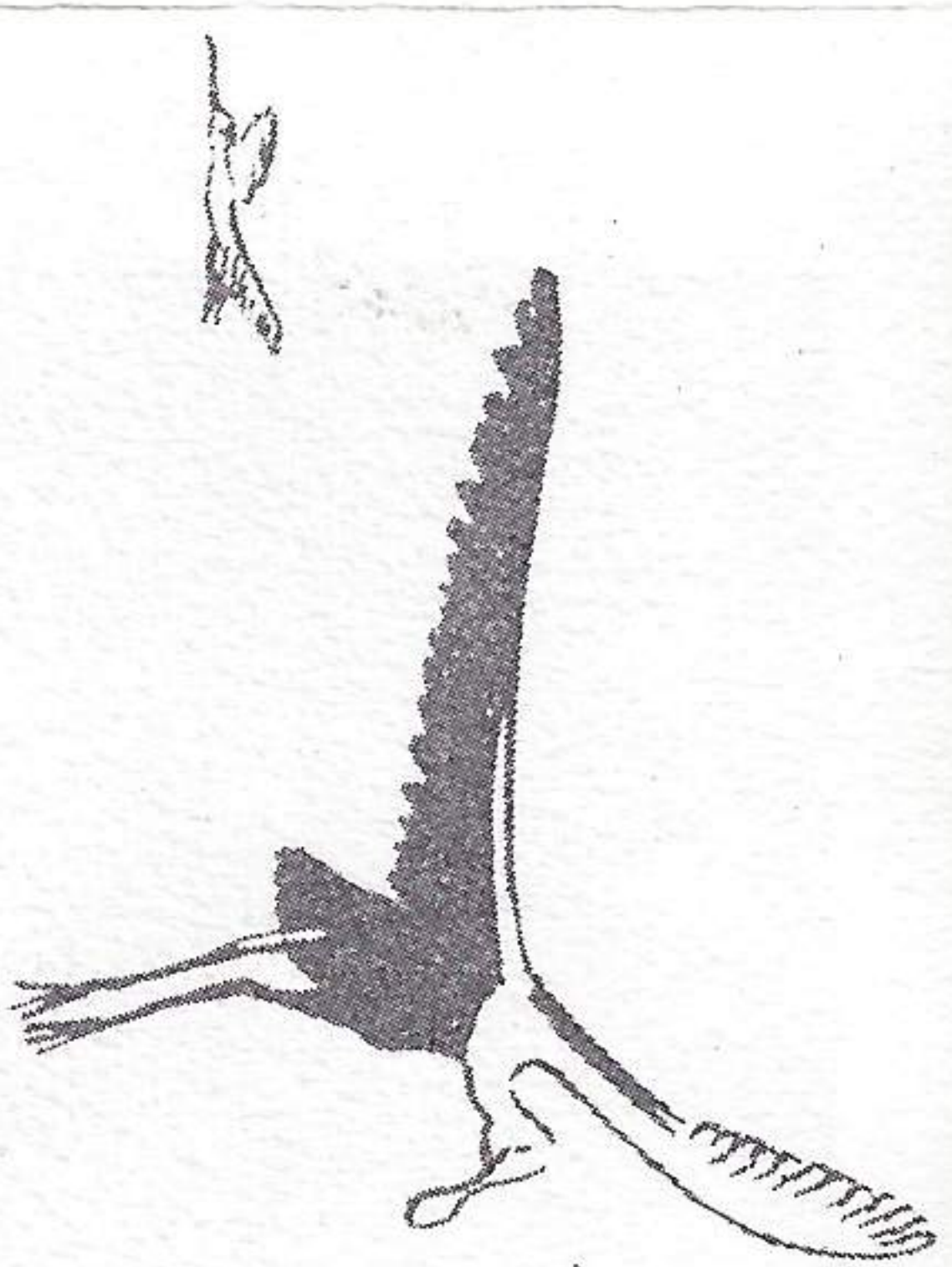
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