



A pond surrounded by cattle. But all around  
thick stands of Pines. Mark and his parents  
were out in the front yard. After our brief greetings,  
Mark retrieved a Red Martin egg or milk wolf.  
Then huddled in a corner was an adult Woodcock  
eyes wide open and terrified but ~~look~~ mouthless,  
not looking too bad for wear.

Mark and his mother and father are real  
~~any~~ to Sanderson Ranch people. To me they - especially  
Mark, spoke like Southerners with a soft and  
mild manner. But clear all the Fargasons were  
excited. A Woodcock in Downtown Houston! We  
speculated that it might have been flying through  
town to some ~~nearby~~ distant swamp and had hit  
a glass window. It was not the first bird that brought  
to me that had suffered that fate. The duck <sup>downtown</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~  
that we gained for the bird was just such a <sup>downtown</sup> ~~casualty~~  
But a Woodcock in Downtown Houston.

It was an addition to be sure. Mark's  
Mom and Dad wanted to keep it to show some  
friends later that evening or the next day. I didn't  
think it would live that long and said so. I asked  
if I could examine the bird outside of its temporary  
cage.

The woodcock put up no resistance I reached  
in the box and picked it up. It showed some signs  
of having been mouthed by Mark's terror. But  
on close inspection seemed to have no broken  
bones, no signs of bleeding even. Only a very faint  
beating heart and beautiful eyes that never blinked.  
I think this bird is OK I said. "It would  
probably survive if we let it go."

Mark's parents gently hinted that they would  
like to keep it long enough to show it to a friend,  
but graciously relented when I told them that  
the bird might die of shock that night. Mark  
nodded his assent as well.

I wanted to see how well it might fly  
on its own so I did not gently for the bird  
up into the air. I just merely opened my hand. The

bird flew out of my hand like it had been shot out of a cannon! And it winged straight a way into the nearby pines. No zig-zagging like its near relative the snipe, but a direct and unaltered straight line to woods. I was delighted. So were Cina, Nini and Mark. I think Mark's parents were a little disappointed.

Then I returned to Fort Worth after a fantastic weekend of hunting, excellent good conversation, a wonderful Thanksgiving dinner, ~~hosted~~ <sup>parted</sup> at Novia's hosted by Cina's mother Helen - La gran patrona <sup>of us as one kind party of four</sup> should wish Nini Taggart, <sup>of Waco, TX</sup> ~~Waco~~ who seemed to know everybody who was anybody, Mallie Higg of the American Museum of Art, her friend Ford Hallbad Jan Houston - All bright, witty, but comfortable people to share a weekend with. On my return sent Mark's parents the color plate of the two Woodcocks from our folio - The picture that appears here...

Although our book has birds as its main artistic focus, the use of Texas in the title has equal importance to Scott and me. And Texas is not only the fabulous ~~area~~ land itself, it is our friends and acquaintances that have graced this land for us and ~~as so much~~ have given our birds here so much meaning.