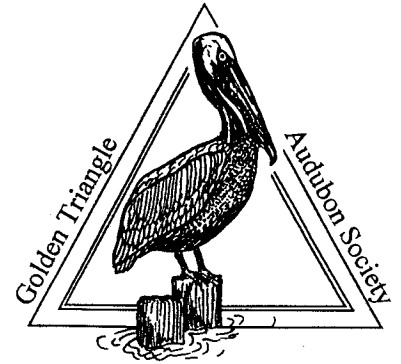


Brown Pelican

Scanned from Originals

The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 7 No. 4

April 2001

Membership Meeting

Thursday, April 19, 2001

6:30 PM, Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont

Great Texas Birds

John P. O'Neill

We have another exciting program for April! John O'Neill is one of the foremost painters of birds in the world. His latest book, *Great Texas Birds*, published a little over a year ago by the University of Texas Press, is a collection of 48 full sized paintings of birds that are identified with Texas. Copies of the book will be available for sale at the meeting. A fuller description of the book and a short biography of John O'Neill can be found on page 3 of this issue.

If you have one or more friends you want to introduce to Audubon, this is another meeting to bring them to! As usual, the doors will be open no later than 6:30 p.m., but the talk will start at 7:15 p.m. approximately.

March Membership Meeting

The members who attended the Thursday, March 15, 2000, membership meeting were delighted to have Roland Wauer as our speaker. Ro was the chief naturalist at Big Bend National Park for six years and retired from the National Parks Service after 32 years of service. He has visited every national park in the United States and Canada but his favorite park is BIG BEND. He thinks it is the best park to watch birds and butterflies.

After a brief description of how to reach the park and the park itself, he began to describe the mammals and birds of Big Bend. Some of the common mammals that you might see include javelina, black bears, mountain lions, white-tailed and mule deer. Starting with the official bird of Texas, the mockingbird, he began his program on the birds of Big Bend. The number one specialty bird of Big Bend is the Colima Warbler. The best single place to find the Colima Warbler is in Boot Canyon. Another place to find this warbler is in Pine Canyon. Big Bend has three hummingbirds that are specialty birds of the park: Lucifer, Blue-throated and Magnificent Hummingbirds. However, fourteen hummingbirds have been recorded in the park including Ruby-throated, Broad-tailed, White-eared, Lucifer, Blue-throated, Magnificent, Rufous, and Black-chinned just to name a few. In the high mountain canyons you might

(continued on page 7)

The Brown Pelican

Vol. 7, No.4 April 2001

Golden Triangle Audubon Society

**RARE BIRD ALERT AND
SOCIETY INFORMATION
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[http://goldtriaudubon.
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Calendar of Events

If you can present a program of interest to a Membership Meeting, or know of some person who can, please contact Jana Whittle at (409) 722-4193.

For more information on field trips, please contact Steve Mayes, (409) 722-5807 or the trip leader.

March 31, April 8, 14, 15, 20. Yellow Rail Walks at Anahuac NWR. Here is the Spring Schedule and leaders.:

March 31 Sat. 7:30 a.m. Refuge Staff

April 8, Sun. 4:30 p.m. David Sarkozi

April 14, Sat. 4:30 p.m. David Sarkozi

April 15, Sun. 7:30 a.m. David Sarkozi

April 20, Fri. 7:30 a.m. Refuge Staff

There is no pre-registration. An attempt is made to limit the number of people on Yellow Rail Prairie at one time but everyone has been accommodated in previous years by dividing participants into small groups. The Yellow Rail Prairie has not been burned since 1997 and is getting pretty rank in places. Water conditions look pretty good right now and there is plenty of good looking habitat for the rails. Walking conditions are tough in places. You will need waterproof foot gear and be prepared for strenuous walking and lots of mosquitoes.

For further information contact David Sarkozi (713) 520-5906 or see his webpage birds of the Upper Texas Coast <http://www.texasbirding.net>

Thursday Apr. 19 – Membership Meeting. See front page for details.

Saturday Apr. 21. Sea Rim Bird Walk. Although we have postponed our regular Field Trip until April 28 for a number of reasons, we will nevertheless be assisting Sea Rim State Park with their annual bird walk to the Willows at Sea Rim on April 21. Meet at Park Headquarters at 7:30 a.m. This trip will involve only easy walking (and the part from headquarters to the entrance to the boardwalk can be driven by those for whom the walk would be a burden). Migration should be well under way by this date. It is not expected that the walk will last more than two hours at the most.

Saturday Apr. 28 – Field Trip to Sea Rim and Sabine Woods. We will meet

outside the headquarters at Sea Rim State Park at 7:30 a.m. We will plan to walk to the Willows just west of Sea Rim. After we finish our walk there, we will drive to Sabine Woods to continue birding there. This trip is designed to hit the peak of migration. As seems to happen each year, this is also the day of the beach clean up. If you plan on participating in the clean-up you can bird for a hour or so with us before the clean up gets started!

Saturday May 12 – International Migratory Bird Day. As usual we will be conducting a county-wide migration count in Jefferson county. Contact John Whittle (409-722-4193) for more details or to indicate your participation.

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank Pat and Don Jeane, Jeannie Lanclos and Jana Whittle for the refreshments in March. **So far, we have no volunteers for the April meeting. We expect quite a few guests at this meeting, so we need a number of volunteers.** We do not expect one person to bring everything. If you can just bring drinks and cookies or something similar, please call Jana Whittle at (409) 722-4193 or Nancy Fisher at (409) 751-0119 as soon as possible. Please help if you can!

Subscription Renewal Reminder

Please check the mailing label on this issue. If the date on your label NOT prefixed by AU has passed, please remit your contribution of \$15 to Golden Triangle Audubon Society at P.O. Box 1292, Nederland, Texas 77627-1292. Although this contribution towards the cost of the Brown Pelican is voluntary for National Audubon Society members living in the official chapter territory, we will appreciate your support. Our official chapter territory is defined by zip codes, but is basically Jefferson, Hardin and Orange Counties and one or two localities close to those Counties.

April Speaker -- John P. O'Neill

John P. O'Neill's recent book *Great Texas Birds*, published by the University of Texas Press, features 48 full page paintings of birds which epitomize the birds of Texas. In most cases, the bird is depicted perched on a typical Texas plant or tree. The accompanying short essays were written by a diverse assortment of contributors, including Bill Graber, Ro Wauer and John and Gloria Tveten.

O'Neill was born in Houston in 1942 and lived there until he went to college in 1960. In 1948 his parents purchased two acres in the "country" west of Houston. Soon afterward, a friend gave him bantam chickens, and a few years later he received a trio of Golden Pheasants. These events, plus the proximity of fields and woods, probably steered him into a love and fascination for birds. At the age of five he finished his first painting, a bantam chicken that he copied from a card and gave to his mother. He has painted birds ever since.

O'Neill's choice of the University of Oklahoma for undergraduate studies was mainly influenced by the presence there of George M. Sutton - ornithologist, naturalist, and renowned painter of birds. In 1961, while on a Fulbright, O'Neill spent the summer with friends in Peru, an expedition that permanently set his life's course. On this first trip, he made a small collection of birds from the Amazonian part of the country. Upon his return to the United States, Sutton suggested the collection be deposited at the Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science, where George H. Lowery, Jr. and his students were becoming involved in studies of tropical birds.

O'Neill has continued his research in Peru ever since. In more than thirty-five years of expeditions and explorations, O'Neill has described thirteen species of birds new to science, more than any living person. The latest was a spectacular new species of barbet (relative of toucans and woodpeckers) found in extremely isolated cloudforest in the headwaters of the Rio Cushabatay, a distant tributary of the Amazon that flows out of the eastern foothills of the Andes. In collaboration with colleagues from the Field Museum of Natural History and other artists, he is preparing a guide to the birds of Peru, a country that has close to 1800 species of birds recorded within its borders, the second largest number of species known in any country in the world - only Colombia has more.

After completing his undergraduate studies at University of Oklahoma, he went on to get his M.S. and Ph.D. at Louisiana State. In 1974 he was appointed a curator for the bird and mammal collections at the L.S.U. Museum of Natural Science, and in 1978 he was appointed its director. However, administrative work was not O'Neill's choice of professional pursuits. He soon took a part-time Staff Research Associate position at L.S.U. and began to spend more time painting. He now supports himself mainly through the sale of his work, which has been published in hundreds of magazines, books, articles, newspapers, and other publications and has been exhibited in museums throughout the United States, as well as in many foreign countries. Included in the list are *Science* (three covers), *Audubon* magazine, *National Geographic*

Magazine and the National Geographic Society's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, Helmut Sick's *Birds in Brazil* and Richard French's *Guide to the Birds of Trinidad and Tobago* in addition to the recently published *Great Texas Birds*. His works has been exhibited in such places as the Houston Museum of Natural Science, the Royal Scottish Academy and the Beijing Natural History Museum.

O'Neill's research interests are mainly in the ecology, zoogeography, systematics, and distribution of Neotropical birds, especially those of Peru, a country with an extremely complex geology, geograohy and climatic past. The winter distribution and ecology of Neotropical migrants is also an important interest of his, including the human aspects of agricultural methods that favor these migrants. In a country like Peru there is also the consideration of habitat availability and usage by southern migrants that depend upon these habitats. There is the need for conservation considerations for migrants during the entire year, an aspect of conservation needing needing little consideration in Central America where very few southern migrants spend the "winter."

O'Neill and his wife Leticia A. "Letty" Alamia live in St. Gabriel, Louisiana (near Baton Rouge) where she raises, trains and shows dogs (German Shepherds and Papillons) and they enjoy native wildlife. They led another major expedition to Peru in 200, and plan another for 2002.

Help Wanted

Golden Triangle Audubon Society (GTAS) is a member of the Beaumont Council of Garden Clubs (BCGC). BCGC is an organization of garden clubs, etc. including nature or environmental clubs (the reason GTAS was allowed to join). By virtue of our membership we are entitled to use the Garden Center for our meetings at no cost to us. Since BCGC is an organization of volunteers, just as we are, they need volunteers to support their programs just as we do. This support centers around maintenance and exhibition of the Gardens and Warren Loose Conservatory, the hothouse.

BCGC needs volunteers to act as tour guides for the Gardens and Conservatory and for office assistants for the Conservatory. Both groups will receive some training. Tour guides work would, of course, be scheduled in advance on an "as needed" basis. The office assistants' primary job is to collect admission for the Conservatory. It is usually very easy duty with not too many customers. (To help pass the time they can read, do personal correspondence, knit, etc.) They may also be occasionally asked to do simple office type jobs such as preparing mail, filing, etc. These assistants work when the Conservatory is open and can choose when they work. For example, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays or 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. on the first Saturday of the month. The biggest need currently is for weekend workers. The Conservatory hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

To volunteer or for more information call Bob Whitman at (409) 835-0644.

Bird Sightings - February 2001

Coverage: Jefferson, Orange, Hardin, Tyler, Jasper, Newton, Angelina, San Augustine and Sabine counties. **Send Reports to:** John Whittle, 3015 Nashville Avenue, Nederland, Texas 77627-6749 by the 10th of the month after or e-mail to whittleja@hal.lamar.edu or call (409) 880-8276 or fax to (409) 880-8270. For "very rare" birds, please submit a brief account of your sighting, including a description of the bird (unless unmistakable), brief details of what it was doing, and where it was seen (if on publicly accessible property).

Format: "Common" to "abundant" birds are shown in the fashion "JEF 4 reps(25)" which means four reports in Jefferson County totaling 25 birds. Less than "common", as JEF-SW 7/5(2) ABC", which means seen in Jefferson County

(JEF) at Sabine Woods (SW) on the 5th of July, two (2) birds, reported by observer "ABC".

Commentary: Many of our regular birders seem to reduce their activities in February, as the winter resident birds begin to thin out, and the first harbingers of the spring migration to come, the shorebirds and the Purple Martins, return. The first Ruby-throated Hummingbirds showed up towards the end of the month, while a Northern Parula was detected in Sabine Woods on the last day of the month. The Couch's Kingbird discovered in Cattail Marsh in January stayed through the first few days of February. Towards the end of the month, a large number of Sandhill Cranes were temporarily resident in the vicinity of Johnson Road in far west Jefferson County.

LOON, Common	NEW 1 rep(3)	DUCK, Ruddy	JEF 2 reps(55)
GREBE, Pied-billed	JEF 4 reps(33)	OSPREY	NEW-TBR 2/4(1) PW
PELICAN, Amer White	ORA 1 rep(2)	KITE, White-tailed	JEF 1 rep(1)
CORMORANT, Neotropic	JEF-TP 2/3(4) JAW; JEF 2/11(1) JAW; JEF 2/24(1) JAW	HARRIER, Northern	ANG 1 rep(1); JEF 5 reps(24)
CORMORANT, Double-crest.	JEF 4 reps(40); NEW 1 rep(38); SAA 1 rep(12); SAB 1 rep(1)	HAWK, Sharp-shinned	JEF-TP 2/24(1) JAW
BITTERN, American	JEF-TP 2/24(1) JAW	HAWK, Cooper's	HAI 2/10(1) DSH; JEF 2/11(1) JAW
HERON, Great Blue	JEF 5 reps(19); ORA 1 rep(3)	HAWK, Red-shouldered	ANG 1 rep(1); JEF 3 reps(8); SAB 1 rep(1)
EGRET, Great	JEF 5 reps(46)	HAWK, Red-tailed	ANG 1 rep(1); JEF 6 reps(47); NEW 1 rep(1); ORA 1 rep(1); SAB 1 rep(1)
EGRET, Snowy	JEF 5 reps(315)	HAWK, Red-tail. (Krider's)	JEF-TP 2/11(1) JAW
HERON, Little Blue	JEF 1 rep(1)	KESTREL, American	ANG 1 rep(6); JEF 6 reps(70); NEW 1 rep(2)
HERON, Tricolored	JEF 1 rep(1)	MOORHEN, Common	JEF 4 reps(36)
EGRET, Cattle	JEF 1 rep(2)	COOT, American	JEF 5 reps(354); SAA 1 rep(1); SAB 1 rep(10)
HERON, Green	JEF-TP 2/3(1) JAW	CRANE, Sandhill	JEF 2/11(125) JAW; JEF 2/25(14) SM; JEF 2/26(300) SR; JEF 2/27(400) KH
NIGHT-HERON, Black-cr.	JEF 2 reps(26)	KILLDEER	ANG 1 rep(1); JEF 3 reps(49); NEW 1 rep(1); ORA 1 rep(3)
IBIS, White	JEF-TP 2/24(8) JAW	YELLOWLEGS, Greater	JEF 2 reps(3)
IBIS, Glossy	JEF-TP 2/3(1) JAW; JEF-TP 2/24(1) JAW	YELLOWLEGS, Lesser	JEF 1 rep(50)
IBIS, White-faced	JEF-TP 2/3(46) JAW; JEF 2/11(105) JAW; JEF-TP 2/11(97) JAW; JEF-TP 2/24(50) JAW; JEF-TX87 2/28(24) KH	SANDPIPER, Western	JEF 1 rep(10)
IBIS, Plegadis	JEF 2/3(15) JAW; JEF-TP 2/3(16) JAW; JEF 2/10(58) MRW; JEF 2/11(50) JAW; JEF-TP 2/24(150) JAW	DUNLIN	JEF 1 rep(50)
SPOONBILL, Roseate	JEF 2/10(1) MRW	DOWITCHER, Short-billed	JEF 2/11(2) JAW
VULTURE, Black	JEF 4 reps(22); NEW 1 rep(8)	DOWITCHER, Long-billed	JEF 1 rep(200)
VULTURE, Turkey	ANG 1 rep(10); HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 3 reps(13); NEW 1 rep(45); SAA 1 rep(8); SAB 1 rep(2)	DOWITCHER species	JEF 1 rep(250)
GOOSE, White-fronted	JEF 1 rep(2)	SNIPE, Common	JEF 1 rep(1)
GOOSE, Snow	JEF 2 reps(2115)	GULL, Laughing	JEF 3 reps(130)
GOOSE, Canada	NEW 1 rep(15)	GULL, Bonaparte's	JEF 2 reps(54)
GADWALL	ANG 1 rep(4); JEF 3 reps(70)	GULL, Ring-billed	JEF 1 rep(1)
WIGEON, American	SAB 1 rep(2)	TERN, Caspian	JEF 1 rep(1)
MALLARD	ANG 1 rep(6); JEF 2 reps(8); NEW 1 rep(2)	TERN, Forster's	JEF 2 reps(44)
DUCK, Mottled	JEF 2/3(1) JAW; JEF 2/10(3) MRW; JEF 2/11(2) JAW; JEF-TP 2/11(2) JAW; JEF 2/24(4) JAW; JEF-TP 2/24(7) JAW; JEF-TX87 2/28(2) KH	DOVE, Rock	JEF 5 reps(105); ORA 1 rep(8)
TEAL, Blue-winged	JEF 3 reps(210)	COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian	JEF 2/10(8) MRW; JEF 2/11(1) JAW; JEF 2/25(2) SM
TEAL, Cinnamon	JEF-TP 2/4(1) SR; JEF-TP 2/11(2) JAW; JEF-TP 2/24(3) JAW	DOVE, White-winged	JEF 2/26(1) JAW
SHOVELER, Northern	JEF 3 reps(465)	DOVE, Mourning	ANG 1 rep(10); HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 7 reps(67); NEW 1 rep(4); ORA 1 rep(6)
TEAL, Green-winged	JEF 2 reps(1250)	OWL, Great Horned	JEF-SW 2/28(1) KH
CANVASBACK	JEF-TP 2/11(1) JAW	HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-thr.	JEF-NEDR 2/23(1) JFW; JEF-NEDR 2/24(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/26(1) JAW
DUCK, Ring-necked	JEF 2 reps(60); SAB 1 rep(2)	KINGFISHER, Belted	JEF 3 reps(3); ORA 1 rep(1)
SCAUP, Greater	JEF-TP 2/3(1) JAW; JEF-TP 2/11(1) JAW; JEF-TP 2/24(3) JAW	WOODPECKER, Red-bellied	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 4 reps(6); NEW 1 rep(1)
SCAUP, Lesser	JEF 2 reps(80)	SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied	HAI 1 rep(1); SAB 1 rep(1)
SCAUP species	JEF 1 rep(4000)	WOODPECKER, Downy	JEF 3 reps(4)
BUFFLEHEAD	JEF 1 rep(10)	WOODPECKER, Pileated	ANG 1 rep(1); JEF 2 reps(2); NEW 1 rep(1)
MERGANSE, Red-breasted	JEF 1 rep(4)	PHOEBE, Eastern	JEF 2 reps(18); NEW 1 rep(1)
		FLYCATCHER, Vermilion	JEF-TP 2/11(1) JAW
		KINGBIRD, Couch's	JEF-TP 2/3(1) JAW; JEF-TP 2/4(1) SR

SHRIKE, Loggerhead ANG 1 rep(2); JEF 5 reps(51)
 JAY, Blue HAI 1 rep(3); JEF 5 reps(20); NEW 1 rep(2)
 CROW, American ANG 1 rep(16); JAS 1 rep(12); JEF 1 rep(3); NEW 1 rep(43); SAA 1 rep(7); SAB 1 rep(1)
 CROW, Fish JEF-TP 2/3(29) JAW; JEF 2/11(3) JAW
 CROW, species JEF 1 rep(1); NEW 1 rep(11); ORA 1 rep(4)
 MARTIN, Purple JEF-TP 2/11(1) JAW; JEF 2/21(5) TL; JEF-SW 2/28(2) KH; ORA 2/25(12) KS
 SWALLOW, Tree JEF-TP 2/11(13) JAW; JEF-TP 2/24(25) JAW; JEF-SW 2/28(25) KH
 CHICKADEE, Carolina HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 2 reps(3); NEW 1 rep(1)
 TITMOUSE, Tufted HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 1 rep(1)
 NUTHATCH, Brown-headed SAB 2/4(3) PW
 WREN, Carolina ANG 1 rep(1); HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 3 reps(6); NEW 1 rep(1)
 WREN, House JEF 2/11(1) JAW
 WREN, Marsh JEF-TP 2/11(1) JAW
 KINGLET, Golden-crowned JEF-SW 2/28(2) KH
 KINGLET, Ruby-crowned JEF 2 reps(8)
 BLUEBIRD, Eastern ANG 1 rep(14); HAI 1 rep(4); JAS 1 rep(2); JEF 4 reps(68); NEW 1 rep(42); SAA 1 rep(6); SAB 1 rep(4)
 THRUSH, Hermit ANG 2/4(1) PW
 ROBIN, American ANG 1 rep(63); HAI 1 rep(3); JAS 1 rep(2); JEF 21 reps(1753); NEW 1 rep(63); ORA 1 rep(13); SAA 1 rep(4); SAB 1 rep(5)
 CATBIRD, Gray JEF-SW 2/28(1) KH
 MOCKINGBIRD, Northern ANG 1 rep(8); HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 4 reps(40); NEW 1 rep(12); ORA 1 rep(3)
 THRASHER, Brown JEF 2 reps(3); NEW 1 rep(3)
 STARLING, European ANG 1 rep(10); HAI 1 rep(1); JAS 1 rep(2); JEF 5 reps(168); NEW 1 rep(18); ORA 1 rep(8)
 PIPIT, American JEF 4 reps(70)
 WARBLER, Orange-crowned JEF 2 reps(4)
 PARULA, Northern JEF-SW 2/28(1) KH
 WARBLER, Yellow-rumped HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 4 reps(82); NEW 1 rep(1)
 WARBLER, Pine HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 3 reps(4); NEW 1 rep(3); SAB 1 rep(1)
 WARBLER, Palm JEF 2/10(1) MRW; JEF-TP 2/11(1) JAW
 YELLOWTHROAT, Common JEF 2 reps(11)
 SPARROW, Chipping HAI 1 rep(1); NEW 1 rep(19)
 SPARROW, Field ANG 2/4(4) PW; NEW 2/4(1) PW
 SPARROW, Savannah ANG 1 rep(12); JEF 5 reps(132); NEW 1 rep(1)
 SPARROW, Song ANG 1 rep(5); JEF 4 reps(15); NEW 1 rep(10)
 SPARROW, Swamp JEF 3 reps(14)
 SPARROW, White-throated ANG 1 rep(3); JEF 2 reps(14); NEW 1 rep(9)
 SPARROW, White-crowned JEF-TP 2/3(6) JAW; JEF 2/11(5) JAW; JEF-TP 2/24(9) JAW
 JUNCO, Dark-eyed ANG 2/4(1) PW; HAI 2/10(9) DSH; NEW 2/4(4) PW
 CARDINAL, Northern ANG 1 rep(4); HAI 1 rep(6); JEF 5 reps(22); NEW 1 rep(17)
 BLACKBIRD, Red-winged ANG 1 rep(50); HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 5 reps(580); ORA 1 rep(215)
 MEADOWLARK, Eastern JEF 3 reps(29)
 MEADOWLARK species ANG 1 rep(4); JEF 3 reps(9); NEW 1 rep(6)
 BLACKBIRD, Brewer's HAI 2/10(1) DSH; JEF 2/25(2) SM
 GRACKLE, Common ANG 1 rep(6); JEF 4 reps(57); ORA 1 rep(4)
 GRACKLE, Boat-tailed JEF 1 rep(75)

GRACKLE, Great-tailed JEF 6 reps(462); ORA 1 rep(7)
 COWBIRD, Brown-headed ANG 1 rep(25); JEF 3 reps(107)
 FINCH, House HAI 2/4(1) NF; HAI 2/10(4) DSH
 SISKIN, Pine HAI 2/4(1) NF; HAI 2/10(7) DSH
 GOLDFINCH, American HAI 1 rep(10); JEF 4 reps(38)
 SPARROW, House HAI 1 rep(8); JEF 2 reps(5); SAB 1 rep(2)

Number of Species 125
 Number of Individuals 17066

County Abbreviations:
 ANG - Angelina; HAI - Hardin; JAS - Jasper; JEF - Jefferson; NEW - Newton; ORA - Orange; SAA - San Augustine; SAB - Sabine

Location Codes:
 BC - Bridge City; NEDR - Nederland; SW - Sabine Woods; TBR - Toledo Bend Reservoir; TP - Tyrrell Park incl. Cattail Marsh; TX87 - Texas 87 Pt. Arthur-Sabine Pass-Sea Rim

Observer Abbreviations:
 DSH - Donna Shannon; JAW - John Whittle; JFW - Jana Whittle; KH - Keith Hansen; KS - Ken Sztraky; MRW - Steve Mayes, Sherrie Roden, John Whittle; NF - Nancy Fisher; PW - Royce Pendergast, John Whittle; SM - Steve Mayes; SR - Sherrie Roden; TL - Travis Lewing.

Bird Alerts

During migration periods, we always wonder whether any alert that we give here will be of any use. This, perforce, has to be written about 10 days before you see it, but many interesting migrants stay only a day or so. Even the Sandhill Cranes mentioned in the commentary above have already moved on.

Certainly, no one can fail to have noticed the very large number of American Robins in the urban areas this January and February. It is quite normal for good numbers of Robins to come down from the woods during February to be seen on every suitable area of grass. This year, they came in large numbers, came early and stayed long. Robins have been expanding as a breeding species in the cities of our area, and there may well be another increase in the breeding population in local urban areas this year. Robins are breeding nearer and nearer the coast every year!

While considering our wintering species, many of you have also noticed that American Kestrels were more numerous this year than in recent past winters. Eastern Bluebirds were also more numerous and further south than usual this winter.

While local populations are hard to assess because there are many inaccessible places where they can concentrate, there is some cause for concern that numbers of Royal Terns have declined significantly. The numbers at such places as Rollover Pass and Bolivar Flats, where there are fewer alternate locations for the birds to frequent, have seemed very low.

One interesting item from Patrick Walther at McFaddin Refuge is a sighting in early March of a Burrowing Owl on the Refuge. Following upon a sighting late last year, it is now clear that small numbers winter in our area. In fact, it may be that they are spread widely throughout Texas in winter, in the coastal plain as well as in the drier areas where they have always been known to winter.

Field Trip to Bolivar Flats 17 March 2001

The weather did not seem too bad as an initial six members assembled at the vehicle barrier at Bolivar Flats. The water level was quite high, promising to concentrate the birds for us in a relatively limited area. However, as we made our way onto the beach, it rapidly became clear that there is nothing near the Flats to moderate a strong east wind! Although the wind was probably only about 20 knots, it seemed like a gale to the participants. As we worked our way along the beach, the wind seemed to increase, and it became very difficult to prevent it from blowing over the lighter scopes and tripods. It was difficult to view the birds as the scopes were not stable in the wind. There was one favorable result of the wind: the birds that were there were very reluctant to fly, and preferred to shelter behind whatever they could – pieces of driftwood, or even piles of seaweed on the beach.

As the first group began to make their way onto the Flats proper, a group of White Ibis was seen flying westward, and then into the marsh behind the flats. American Avocets were everywhere in large numbers. While two or three thousand were seen – in the distance at this point – standing in a very compact group further west, there were also many feeding in the quite violent surf. It had been windy for several days, so perhaps they were very hungry. While many were still in winter plumage, others were in various stages of acquiring the pinkish tan neck that makes the American Avocet an even more striking bird than the purely black and white Eurasian or Pied Avocet. It is interesting to note in the following item that the 5,000 or so American Avocets present constitute over one percent of the world population

Turning to some of the smaller shorebirds, among the always present Sanderlings were a good number of Ruddy Turnstones. And, as we worked our way west, a similar number – perhaps more -- Red Knots were found. The Red Knot is now a species of concern, especially in the areas of Chesapeake and Delaware Bays, where the commercial taking of Horseshoe Crabs for fish bait has drastically reduced the food (crab eggs) available at the species favored migration stopover points. This Spring has seen larger than normal numbers on Bolivar Flats – let us hope this is repeated in future years. We looked, almost in vain, for any sign of the red breast and belly that is the attractive feature on the Red Knot in breeding plumage. We had to settle for three or four which had a few splotches of still very pale red.

Getting down to serious business, the less experienced birders present had an opportunity to study the smaller plovers. While there were not any Semi-palmated Plovers in evidence (although there probably were some crouched down in the sand that we could not see well enough to be sure), there were many Wilson's Plovers, larger and with longer thicker bills. Several pale Piping Plovers were available for study, with incomplete breast bands as is normal here, and black face markings sharply contrasting in their breeding plumage. Then we found the Piping Plovers. Normally about 100 spend the winter there, two percent of the world population.

Other species present included Dunlins and Black-bellied Plovers. A review of the gulls and terns in the big group did not turn up anything more unusual than a few Bonaparte's Gull

almost in the marsh. But then, four Least Terns were found crouching down in the sand with the small plovers.

As the first group decided to head back to the vehicles, four more members showed up. By now, the wind was even stronger, but we showed them all the species we had found, and they showed us the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron they had discovered. They also reported seeing a Horned Lark on their way in. Normally, we would have proceeded to other locations on the Peninsula, but the wind was just too troublesome, and the field trip ended.

The following species were noted on the Flats.

American White Pelican (50); Brown Pelican (20); Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (1); White Ibis (25); Lesser Scaup (10); Scaup species (50); Black-bellied Plover (25); Snowy Plover (10); Wilson's Plover (15); Piping Plover (15); American Avocet (5000); Greater Yellowlegs (1); Willet (50); Long-billed Curlew (2); Marbled Godwit (25); Ruddy Turnstone (50); Red Knot (25); Sanderling (100); Western Sandpiper (25); Least Sandpiper (5); Dunlin (100); Short-billed Dowitcher (50); Laughing Gull (25); Bonaparte's Gull (15); Ring-billed Gull (20); Herring Gull (15); Caspian Tern (3); Royal Tern (5); Forster's Tern (25); Least Tern (4); Black Skimmer (2); Barn Swallow (2); Horned Lark (1).

John A. Whittle

Shorebird Populations

The Canadian Wildlife Service has just released its "Estimates of shorebird populations in North America" (Occasional Paper Number 104) authored by R.I.G. (Guy) Morrison (2001) and five other Canadian and American ornithologists. Remember that these numbers are best estimates. NA = North America.

Black-bellied Plover: Global 498,000 with 200,000 in NA.
American Golden-Plover: 150,000+
Pacific Golden-Plover: Global population 125,000 with 16,000 in NA.
Snowy Plover: Global 586,000 with 16,000 in NA.
Wilson's Plover: 6000+
Common Ringed Plover: Global 442,500 with less than 10,000? in NA.
Semipalmated Plover: 150,000
Piping Plover: 5913 with 2110 in Canada.
Killdeer: 1,000,000+ with Canadian population estimate of 366,000.
Size of Neotropical population is unknown.
Mountain Plover: 9000 with 10 in Canada.
American Oystercatcher: Global 58,850 with 8850 in NA and 4 in Canada.
Black Oystercatcher: 8900
Black-necked Stilt: Global 850,000+ with 150,000 in NA and 400 in Canada.
American Avocet: 450,000 with 63,000 in Canada.
Greater Yellowlegs: 100,000
Lesser Yellowlegs: 500,000
Solitary Sandpiper: 25,000
Willet: 250,000 with 25,000 in Canada. Eastern nominate subspecies *semipalmatus* estimated at 90,000 and western interior subspecies (*inornatus*) at 160,000.
Wandering Tattler: 10,000 with 5,000 in Canada.
Spotted Sandpiper: 150,000
Upland Sandpiper: 350,000 with 10,000 in Canada.
Eskimo Curlew: Less than 50 if the species still survives.
Whimbrel: Global 797,000+ with 57,000 in NA.
Bristle-thighed Curlew: 10,000. This species breeds in Alaska and winters in Oceania.
Long-billed Curlew: 20,000. The Canadian breeding population is probably several thousand birds.
Hudsonian Godwit: 50,000 with about 10,000 migrating through James Bay.
Bar-tailed Godwit: Global 1,345,000 with 100,000 in NA.

Marbled Godwit: 171,500. The Canadian breeding population is about 103,000 with the small James Bay population estimated at 1000 to 2000 birds.

Ruddy Turnstone: Global 449,000 with 235,000 in NA.

Black Turnstone: 80,000

Surfbird: 70,000

Red Knot: Global 1,290,000 with 400,000 in NA.

Sanderling: Global 643,000 with 300,000 in NA.

Semipalmated Sandpiper: 3,500,000

Western Sandpiper: 3,500,000

Least Sandpiper: 600,000

White-rumped Sandpiper: 400,000

Baird's Sandpiper: 300,000

Pectoral Sandpiper: 400,000

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper: Global 166,000 with about 1000 using the NA Pacific coast south of Alaska.

Purple Sandpiper: Global 65,000 with 15,000 in Canada.

Rock Sandpiper: Global 200,000 with 150,000 in NA including 1000+ wintering in British Columbia.

Dunlin: Global 3,934,000 with 1,525,000 in NA.

Stilt Sandpiper: 200,000

Buff-breasted Sandpiper: 15,000

Short-billed Dowitcher: 320,000. Three well-marked subspecies with estimates of 110,000 for eastern nominate *griseus*, interior *hendersoni* about 60,000, and western *caurinus* about 150,000.

Long-billed Dowitcher: 500,000

Common Snipe: Global 26,750,000 with 2,000,000 in NA.

American Woodcock: 5,000,000 with 1,000,000 in Canada.

Wilson's Phalarope: 1,500,000 with 680,000 in Canada.

Red-necked Phalarope: Global 4,000,000 with 2,500,000 in NA.

Red Phalarope: 1,000,000

Four Additional Species:

Gray-tailed Tattler: Confirmed breeding record for Alaska.

Red-necked Stint: A few dozen breed in Alaska.

Curlew Sandpiper: A few dozen breed in Alaska.

Ruff: A few dozen breed in Alaska.

This 64 page report (Occasional Paper Number 104) is available from: Publications, Canadian Wildlife Service, Environment Canada; Ottawa, ON K1A 0H3 (819) 997-1095; (819) 997-2756 (fax); cws-scf@ec.gc.ca; <http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca>

Sabine Woods Work Day

Apparently I picked a day with conflicts for many of you for the work day this early Spring. However -- to those who worked before the official day (thanks Don Fisher) and those who worked on the day itself (March 10) -- Steve Mayes, Robert Hurt and Steve Kuritz, many thanks.

The trails are mowed, almost manicured, and a good number of excess wild grape vines have been cut. We plan to use available grant money first to do the inevitable "mop up" after last year's major tallow removal effort. We will also treat the excess wild rose. After that we will deal with some of the "every few years" bushhogging called for in the conservation plan. If additional funds come through as expected, we will likely proceed with a water project.

I have a problem with the work day that we normally schedule late in May: I have a conflict with May 19 (rather earlier than we normally do anyway), May 26 is available (but is Memorial Day weekend), and I have a conflict with June 2. By June 9, we run the risk of it being rather hot, and the deer fly population too healthy. If I schedule on May 26, will you come? If not, is there someone else who would like to volunteer to be there to coordinate on June 2 in my absence?

John A. Whittle

March Meeting Report (cont. from page 1)

find Black-headed Grosbeak, Hutton's Vireo, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Colima Warbler, Whip-poor-will, White-breasted Nuthatch, Northern Flicker (Red shafted) and Band-tailed Pigeon. The Flammulated Owl is one of the park's most sought after bird and can be found in Boot Canyon if you stay overnight. Painted Redstarts are found in Big Bend some years. In the pinyon-juniper woodlands which starts at about 3,500 feet to the top of the mountains you might find the Mexican Jay, Acorn Woodpecker, Hepatic Tanager, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Black-crested Titmouse, Bushtit, Spotted Towhee, and Bewick's and Canyon Wrens. All along Panther Pass you might find nesting Gray and Black-capped Vireos. Varied Buntings and Blue Grosbeaks can be found along the Window Trail. Below the pinyon-juniper woodlands (below about 3,500 feet) and just above the true desert, you are likely to find Varied Bunting, Black-chinned, Rufous-crowned and Cassin's Sparrows, Canyon Towhee, American Kestrel, Elf Owl, Loggerhead Shrike, Scott's Oriole, and Ladder-backed Woodpecker. During the winter months you can regularly hear the chips of the Western and Eastern Meadowlarks; but during the nesting season there is another subspecies of the Eastern Meadowlark that can be found. The Lilian's Meadowlark nests just north of Mexico City throughout the Chihuahuan Desert up to about Carlsbad, New Mexico. Some of the desert species include the Mockingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Lesser Nighthawk, Black-throated Sparrow, Cactus Wren, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Verdin, Scaled Quail, and Greater Roadrunner. Curve-billed Thrashers can be found right at the park's headquarters cleaning insects off car grills. Another interesting habitat is the area along the river and floodplain area. Here you might find White-winged Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Summer Tanager, Cliff Swallow, Yellow-breasted Chat, Bell's Vireo, Common Yellowthroat, Cardinal, Black Phoebe, Painted Bunting, and Vermilion Flycatcher. The common woodpecker of this low land area is the Golden-fronted. There are a few birds that are at Big Bend in some years and some years they're not: Gray Hawk and Common Black Hawk. The common nesting heron is the Green Heron. The Mexican Duck is common along the river. Look for a Green Kingfisher at the old beaver pond. Peregrines also nest in the park. Wintering birds would include Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Eastern Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, House Finch, White-crowned and Swamp Sparrows, and Green-winged Teal.

Don't forget to stop at the park's visitor's center and ask to see the wild life records. Here you will find out what special birds are being found. I think this habitat-illustrated presentation of the birds of Big Bend was one of the best programs our club has sponsored. Ro made available several of his books and graciously autographed our purchases. Thank you so much for the most interesting program. Don and I have visited Big Bend twice but I cannot wait to bird the various habitats mentioned in the presentation and use the new books we purchased. Our next membership program will be Thursday, April 19, 2001. Hope to see you there!

Nancy Fisher

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RARE BIRD ALERTS

Below is a listing of Rare Bird Alert telephone numbers for nearby areas. Transcriptions of some current tapes are available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.stat.wharton.upenn.edu/~siler/hoturls.html>

Detailed information (maps and text) on birding sites on the Upper Texas Coast is also available on the Web at <http://www.texasbirding.net>. This includes all the Jefferson County hotspots published in early issues.

Golden Triangle (409) 768-1340

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