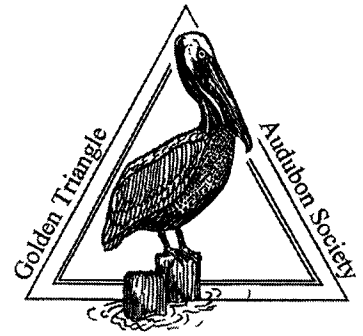


Brown Pelican

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The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 12 No. 10

October 2006

Membership Meeting
Thursday, October 19, 2006
6:30 PM, Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont

Birding in Ecuador
Gerald Duhon and Steve Mayes

Last June, a group of our members went on a birding trip to Ecuador. They will describe their experiences, some of the logistics involved, and show us some pictures of the birds that they saw. Ecuador, as its name implies, lies on the Equator. It is on the west coast of South America, nestled between Colombia and Peru. By area, the country has an area under half the area of Texas, and a population of under 10 million. The country is bisected north-south by the Cordillera Real range of the Andes, reaching over 20,500 feet and including several peaks over 15,000 feet. The capital Quito, just south of the Equator, is at 9,250 feet. The eastern part of the country is of much lower elevation, including the headwaters of some of the tributaries of the Amazon. The largest city is Guayaquil, on the coast. Not to be forgotten is that the Galápagos Islands, 600 miles west of the mainland of South America are part of Ecuador. Ecuador has an exceedingly rich avifauna.

As usual, the doors will open no later than 6:30 p.m., but the talk will start at 7:00 p.m. approximately.

Mini Editorial

This issue of the *Brown Pelican* is again "heavier" on bird population information than we would prefer. Not that the bird population data is not important. It is critically important, and often provides the first sign of impending environmental trouble. In that regard, birds are an excellent indicator. We would, however, like to be presenting our readers with a better balance of articles addressing habitat issues and public policy issues related to conservation among other things.

Our misgivings are somewhat assuaged by the recognition that our account of the Fall Migration Count addresses many habitat issues in the aftermath of Hurricane Rita. Unfortunately, it would consume altogether too much space to present all the information that is available from the count. (All the information, including historical results by area for this and all previous fall migration counts, is available as an Excel spreadsheet to anyone who wants it.)

Surely there are some of you out there that are following one or more of the current conservation issues? We'd love to have you write an account to enlighten all our readers.

The Brown Pelican

Vol. 12, No.10 October 2006

Golden Triangle
Audubon Society

See Web Site for more
information
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

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The Brown Pelican is

published monthly except July
by the Golden Triangle Audubon
Society,

P. O. Box 1292, Nederland,
Texas 77627-1292

Calendar of Events

Thursday October 19. Membership Meeting. See page 1 for details.

Saturday October 21. Field Trip to Sabine Woods. A trip to look for migrating fall warblers and other neotropical migrants. Leader Steve Mayes. Meet at Sabine Woods, which is 4.1 miles west of Sabine Pass on the north side of Highway 87 at 7:30 a.m.. or join the trip in progress in the woods later. There has been luxuriant growth this summer and fall, so the vegetation is quite high in places, and rubber boots would be a good idea, especially if it is at all wet from previous rain or just heavy early morning dew. Depending on the birds, we may also bird the Willows at Sea Rim State Park.

Thursday November 16. Annual Meeting. Speaker Ro Wauer. Tentative topic Big Bend Superlatives, Birds and Butterflies. Full details in next issue. We will also hold our elections.

Saturday November 18. Field Trip to West Jefferson County Details in next issue.

Sunday December 31. Sea Rim State Park Christmas Bird Count. Contact John Whittle at 409-722-4193 or john.whittle@lamar.edu for more details.

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank Sherry Gibson, Margo Holst, D. J. Kava, Jeannie Lanclos, Sherrie Roden, Christine Sliva and Jana Whittle for bringing refreshments in September. We **need volunteers to bring all items for all other Fall 2006 meetings, from October onwards.** Please do not wait until the last minute to volunteer! We do not expect one person to bring everything, but please call so we can coordinate! If you can just bring drinks and cookies or something similar, please call Jana Whittle at (409) 722-4193 **as far in advance as possible.** Please help if you can!



Earth Share
OF TEXAS

Earth Share of Texas represents the Audubon Foundation of Texas and the National Audubon Society in payroll deduction plans for charitable giving. For information, call 1-800-GREENTX or email estx@earthshare-texas.org.

So just what is Earth Share? It's an organization that supports more than 70 local, state, and national environmental groups. That support comes through people like you, via payroll giving and direct contributions. And one of the groups supported by Earth Share is the Audubon Foundation of Texas (AFT).

AFT's purpose is to provide financial support to the state's 21 Audubon Chapters; this year that support came to \$7500. AFT gives special consideration to chapters just getting started. But every Chapter receives something (distributions to Chapters are based on contributions received from the Chapter's region).

AFT also runs a grant program which this year totalled \$7000. These grants support Chapter conservation, education, communications, and development projects.

How can you help promote Audubon in Texas? Contribute to Earth Share. If you work for an business that participates in Earth Share's payroll contribution program, that's an easy way to give. Employees of many government agencies can also participate in payroll giving. And the Texas State Employees Charitable Campaign, which includes state-supported institutions of higher learning, supports Earth Share as well. In any case, when you contribute to Earth Share be sure to specify the Audubon Foundation of Texas.

What if your employer doesn't participate in the payroll giving campaign? No problem. You can send a check to Earth Share of Texas at 707 West Avenue, Suite 203, Austin TX 78701. Or contribute on line at estx@earthshare-texas.org. Again, please be sure to specify the Audubon Foundation of Texas.

For more information on the Audubon Foundation of Texas, e-mail John Kelly at jfkellyaustin52@hotmail.com or call him at (512) 331-8693. And if you'd like to know more about Earth Share of Texas, visit its web site at the address shown above or call (800) GREENTX.

Fall Migration Count – 17 September 2006 and some observations of the effects of Hurricane Rita on local bird populations

We approached this year's fall migration count with a good deal of extra curiosity. We conducted last year's count exactly one week before Hurricane Rita hit on September 24, and we wondered if this would be our first real opportunity to assess any medium term effects on local bird populations. The middle of September is just a little short of the half-way point of the migration window in our area of the Neotropic-Nearctic migrants that are the focus of the attention of so many birders. By this time, the peak passage the true shorebird migrants has passed, although not all of the wintering shorebirds have arrived. However, of the waterfowl, only Blue-winged Teal, most of which pass through for points further south, are found in any numbers, and no self-respecting sparrow has yet deserted the bountiful feast of seeds still available further north. Hummingbird migration does peak in mid-September, while the most sharply peaking raptor migration – that of Broad-winged Hawks – occurs a couple of weeks later.

But probably only a very few migrants were caught up in the full fury of the hurricane, most probably staying north or veering west to avoid the brunt of the storm. Resident birds were not so fortunate. Not being accustomed to long distance flights, some were doubtless exposed to the brunt of the hurricane force winds as the shelter that they choose disintegrated around them or proved inadequate. The good news is that we did not find any species with population changes that are of great concern. One interesting item we were able to confirm was something that was becoming very clear on an anecdotal basis. There have been significant decreases in the numbers of passerine birds in the open areas of west Jefferson County. It only shows to a limited extent in the summary totals below, but is more obvious in the detailed area-by-area data. Red-winged Blackbirds and Great-tailed Grackles are present in greatly reduced numbers, even if the grackles patrolling the local McDonalds are still very obvious. However, there was some evidence of a drop in populations of those species in the previous year before the hurricane. Also, the effect of the still decreasing acreage devoted to rice farming should not be ignored. Other birds typically found in the open areas such as Northern Mockingbirds and Loggerhead Shrikes were certainly reduced in numbers, although this is somewhat masked when the seemingly little changed populations in the residential areas are included in the totals. In the case of the shrikes, the picture is probably complicated because there is some reason to think that the shrikes that we see during the winter may not be the same birds as are present during the summer – this is, they could all or almost all be migratory, with our breeding birds wintering further south and our wintering birds breeding to our north. The same situation could apply to Eastern Meadowlarks.

After that long preamble, we have to report that 173 species were recorded on the count, six more than on any of the prior ten counts. However, the number of species is somewhat dependent on the vagaries of how many passerine migrant species are present in the coastal woodlots, the water levels in and thus the number of species to be found in Cattail

Marsh, and on such other factor as the amount of accessible shorebird habitat available in the county. The number of birds seen is probably of much greater significance in trying to assess the impact of Hurricane Rita. The number counted was right in the middle of the "normal" range, and the number of observers and the number of hours they counted was also pretty much in the middle of the normal range. In addition, there was no access to the road to the Pilot Station at Texas Point (while the bridge over Texas Bayou is being rebuilt), and only very limited access to the beach at Sea Rim State Park.

Starting at the top of the list, John Haynes observed a relatively small flock of early Greater White-fronted Geese over Cattail Marsh. This was a new species for the count. In addition to a high number of Blue-winged Teals, there were a lot of early Green-winged Teal, and we repeated last year's find of a couple of Northern Pintails.

We were gratified to find a reasonable number of Pied-billed Grebes both in Cattail Marsh and elsewhere, after finding only one last year. An Eared Grebe was also seen for only the second time on the count.

The small number of Brown Pelicans seen was probably not an access issue as they can be seen and identified at great distances. However, most of the Brown Pelicans in Jefferson County are immature birds, which tend to disperse from the breeding colonies in unpredictable numbers and variable directions. In looking for more pelicans, Steve Mayes and Jeff Pittman found two Magnificent Frigatebirds, another first for the count. There have always been a few wandering immature frigatebirds roosting in East Bay near Smith Point, but we understand that the population there has exploded this year, so a couple offshore from Jefferson County is perhaps not surprising.

Hérons and egrets were found in what appear to be very much normal numbers. Despite being in a section of the coast where Reddish Egrets are considered to be essentially absent, we found one for the tenth time in 11 years. Cattle Egrets seemed very plentiful to observers in the western part of the county, but the overall totals were near normal. We wondered about how this species had fared in the hurricane. Perhaps we cannot tell since herons and egrets are nomadic over at least short distances, and if there were any losses, other birds probably moved in to take advantage of the habitat. Dark ibis (White-faced Ibis and those recorded only as *Plegadis* species) were at a new high. It was nice to see Wood Storks reported, even if in ones, twos and threes, by four separate parties.

A small migrating flock of 12 Mississippi Kites was seen along the coast, while a small number of Broad-winged Hawks were also seen. American Kestrel and a much smaller number of Merlins are typically obvious by late September, but we found one of each on the count after seeing neither species last year. Christine Sliva provided a report of two Crested Caracara near Interstate 10 in the Hamshire area. This was a new species to the count, although we know there are also others in the areas south of Highway 73 west of Taylor Bayou, and also along the coast between Sabine Woods and Sea Rim.

Without access to Pilot Station Road or Sea Rim, we knew that rails would be difficult to find, and Clapper Rail was the only species recorded. Purple Gallinules used to be considered a very good find in Jefferson County, but two in Cattail Marsh provided further evidence that we now have a small breeding population. Anyone looking at the large winter flocks of American Coots would find it hard to believe that we would find only one, and that one in the west central part of the county. Coots are apparently more strongly migratory than they are usually given credit for, although Common Moorhens do certainly breed locally and much larger number of those are seen.

Despite the limited beach access, a record number (13) of Piping Plovers were found – a very welcome development – and there was again a good showing of Snowy Plovers. Upland Sandpiper has never been easy to find in Jefferson County, but Margo Holst and D. J. Kava found one for the second year running in the northwest environs of Beaumont. We recorded no Whimbrels or Long-billed Curlews, although we know they have been seen recently in relatively remote parts of the local National Wildlife Refuges. Smaller number of the smaller "peep" sandpipers were recorded except for a good dozen Baird's Sandpipers in Cattail Marsh. While looking over a good number of Pectoral Sandpipers in Cattail Marsh, John Haynes found a pair of Buff-breasted Sandpipers, another species new to the count. This species is probably more numerous in the fall than we realize, as it is quite difficult to find.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the only gulls recorded were Laughing Gulls and Ring-billed Gulls. The terns were better represented, with lots of Caspian, Royal and Gull-billed, but it was surprising that there were apparently no lingering Least Terns. Sandwich Terns were not seen, but than happens on about half of the counts.

Large flocks of Rock Pigeons seemingly reflects that they were not significantly affected by the hurricane. White-winged Doves continued their increase, especially in mid- and south-county areas. Mourning Doves were down only a little. It was nice to see ten Yellow-billed Cuckoos after missing the species altogether in the previous two years.

One each of Barn, Eastern Screech-, Barred and Great Horned Owls was reasonably normal, with perhaps some concern about only one Barn Owl. For the second year in a row, we found no Common Nighthawks, although the species was present in Nederland a few days prior.

The count takes place quite a bit before the peak of Ruby-throated Hummingbird migration, although there are always a good number in places where they have been provided with feeders year after year. Hummingbirds seem to have a good memory for where feeders were in previous years. Rufous Hummingbirds, although wintering along the Gulf coast in small but increasing numbers, are not normally expected until somewhat later. However, there was a stunning adult male at Rose Ann and Harrison Jordan's in north Beaumont, returning for the third or fourth year. Belted Kingfishers seem to be on the increase and a good number were present.

One group of birds that could be expected to have benefited from the tree damage in the hurricane was the woodpeckers. Quite frankly, the showing was a little

disappointing. Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers were both down in numbers. We wonder if perhaps the aggressive clearing of fallen trees in Jefferson County and the less intensive attention they received in Hardin County may have resulted in more birds to our north. While woodpeckers can probably expect favorable habitat for a few years to come, it will take time for populations to increase

Flycatchers would have been classified as very normal, but for the *Empidonax* group. A large number were seen, including many away from the coast. Opportunities to closely observe the birds are often less available there and many were, wisely, left unidentified beyond being "Empids." Eastern Kingbirds were scarce as a breeding species this year – it is difficult to know if this had anything to do with the hurricane – but it was no surprise that we found only a few.

Blue Jay populations seem to have rebounded to a healthy level, after what we assume was a problem with West Nile virus, to which the Corvids are apparently particularly sensitive. The other Corvids in the area – crows – were present in numbers very similar to the two previous years. Fish Crows particularly seem to be significantly down from their historic norms. Perhaps their greater tendency to congregate in significant sized flocks did not serve them well in this instance.

There always seem to be a good number of Barn Swallows around on count day, and this year was no exception. Eric Sztraky found a large number of Cliff Swallows in extreme west Jefferson County. This is not very surprising, given the continued eastward range expansion the species is currently undergoing. We regularly get good number of Northern Rough-winged Swallows, sometimes, as this year, more of those than Tree Swallows. The absence of Bank Swallows was a little disappointing.

Another species added to the count was Brown-headed Nuthatch, found by Ray Jordan and Ken Sztraky in the south central part of the county. This species has become progressively more numerous in the areas just north of the county, and it was perhaps not surprising. But the species does stick very closely to wooded areas and is even less likely than Carolina Chickadees and Tufted Titmice to cross over significant open areas. A little more surprising was the failure to find either Marsh Wren or House Wren.

The absence of any *Catharus* thrushes was disappointing, but perhaps unlikely to have had anything to do with the hurricane. As already noted, Northern Mockingbirds seemed to be very much reduced in numbers in the open areas in west Jefferson County, even if more nearly normal in the residential areas. The overall result was a very low total. European Starlings were also less numerous than usual.

Finding only three species of Vireo was a little disappointing, even if White-eyed Vireos seemed to be everywhere away from the coast. However, the total of 23 warbler species was very impressive. It is perhaps invidious to pick out a few species, but Wilson's Warblers, Northern Waterthrushes and Canada Warblers were prominent in the numbers column, in addition, of course, to Common Yellowthroats and Pine Warblers.

Another species of possible concern for hurricane effects, Northern Cardinal, was seen in normal numbers. Blue Grosbeaks seemed to be everywhere away from the coast, but

Indigo Buntings were scarce. Six Painted Buntings was about normal.

Among the blackbirds, we have already commented on the Red-winged Blackbird and Great-tailed Grackles numbers which were very low by historical standards. Common Grackles, on the other hand, were near normal, as were House Sparrows. We heard many laments that House Sparrows disappeared after the hurricane, but we wonder if perhaps there were just many more places to hide.

Finally, another new species added to the count list was a male Orange Bishop, found by Sherrie Roden and the Davis's in the north part of Port Arthur, essentially on the banks of the Neches just "south" of Highway 73 near the Veterans' Bridge. While this species from sub-Saharan Africa was undoubtedly an escaped cage bird, the species is shown in some North American field guides as a result of an established population in California. More recently, a few birds were surviving the Houston fairly near the Galleria.

An Excel spreadsheet with data from all previous fall counts, including area breakdowns, is available. Email your request to john.whittle@lamar.edu.

Species seen were:

WHISTLING-DUCK, Black-bellied (47); WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous (43); GOOSE, Greater White-fronted (13); DUCK, Wood (12); DUCK, Mottled (136); TEAL, Blue-winged (838); SHOVELER, Northern (22); PINTAIL, Northern (3); TEAL, Green-winged (85); GREBE, Pied-billed (17); GREBE, Eared (1); PELICAN, American White (2); PELICAN, Brown (10); CORMORANT, Neotropic (98); CORMORANT, Double-crested (6); ANHINGA (7); FRIGATEBIRD, Magnificent (2); BITTERN, Least (4); HERON, Great Blue (26); EGRET, Great (286); EGRET, Snowy (294); HERON, Little Blue (36); HERON, Tricolored (42); EGRET, Reddish (1); EGRET, Cattle (1605); HERON, Green (23); NIGHT-HERON, Black-crowned (7); NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crowned (4); IBIS, White (275); IBIS, White-faced (25); IBIS, Plegadis (624); SPOONBILL, Roseate (106); STORK, Wood (8); VULTURE, Black (14); VULTURE, Turkey (67); OSPREY (1); KITE, White-tailed (3); KITE, Mississippi (12); HARRIER, Northern (1); HAWK, Sharp-shinned (1); HAWK, Cooper's (2); HAWK, Accipiter species (3); HAWK, Red-shouldered (15); HAWK, Broad-winged (6); HAWK, Swainson's (2); HAWK, Red-tailed (4); CARACARA, Crested (2); KESTREL, American (1); MERLIN (1); RAIL, Clapper (14); GALLINULE, Purple (2); MOORHEN, Common (79); COOT, American (1); PLOVER, Black-bellied (52); PLOVER, Snowy (29); PLOVER, Semipalmated (2); PLOVER, Piping (13); KILLDEER (146); STILT, Black-necked (146); AVOCET, American (18); YELLOWLEGS, Greater (7); YELLOWLEGS, Lesser (41); YELLOWLEGS, species (1); WILLET (17); SANDPIPER, Spotted (2); SANDPIPER, Upland (1); TURNSTONE, Ruddy (1); SANDERLING (185); SANDPIPER, Semipalmated (42); SANDPIPER, Western (300); SANDPIPER, Least (502); SANDPIPER, Baird's (12); SANDPIPER, Pectoral (58); SANDPIPER, Peep species (1716); SANDPIPER, Stilt (32); SANDPIPER, Buff-breasted (2); DOWITCHER, Long-billed (30); DOWITCHER, Species

(300); PHALAROPE, Wilson's (10); GULL, Laughing (929); GULL, Ring-billed (8); TERN, Gull-billed (13); TERN, Caspian (53); TERN, Royal (158); TERN, Forster's (61); TERN, Black (91); SKIMMER, Black (8); PIGEON, Rock (763); COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian (25); DOVE, White-winged (74); DOVE, Mourning (386); DOVE, Inca (3); CUCKOO, Yellow-billed (10); OWL, Barn (1); SCREECH-OWL, Eastern (1); OWL, Great Horned (1); OWL, Barred (1); WILL'S-WIDOW, Chuck- (2); SWIFT, Chimney (31); HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-throated (183); HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous (1); HUMMINGBIRD species (13); KINGFISHER, Belted (20); WOODPECKER, Red-headed (1); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (18); WOODPECKER, Downy (11); WOODPECKER, Pileated (7); WOOD-PEWEE, Eastern (6); FLYCATCHER, Yellow-bellied (2); FLYCATCHER, Acadian (1); FLYCATCHER, Traill's (2); FLYCATCHER, Least (9); FLYCATCHER, *Empidonax* (36); FLYCATCHER, Great Crested (10); KINGBIRD, Western (1); KINGBIRD, Eastern (19); FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tailed (42); SHRIKE, Loggerhead (83); VIREO, White-eyed (34); VIREO, Warbling (2); VIREO, Red-eyed (3); JAY, Blue (80); CROW, American (13); CROW, Fish (16); CROW, Species (7); MARTIN, Purple (3); SWALLOW, Tree (53); SWALLOW, N. Rough-winged (80); SWALLOW, Cliff (152); SWALLOW, Barn (545); CHICKADEE, Carolina (22); TITMOUSE, Tufted (13); NUTHATCH, Brown-headed (1); WREN, Carolina (19); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (32); BLUEBIRD, Eastern (11); ROBIN, American (10); CATBIRD, Gray (1); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (128); THRASHER, Brown (3); STARLING, European (274); WARBLER, Blue-winged (2); WARBLER, Tennessee (1); WARBLER, Nashville (2); PARULA, Northern (1); WARBLER, Yellow (40); WARBLER, Magnolia (5); WARBLER, Black-throated Green (1); WARBLER, Blackburnian (1); WARBLER, Yellow-throated (1); WARBLER, Pine (11); WARBLER, Black-and-white (9); REDSTART, American (4); WARBLER, Prothonotary (1); WARBLER, Worm-eating (1); OVENBIRD (1); WATERTHRUSH, Northern (7); WARBLER, Kentucky (3); WARBLER, Mourning (1); YELLOWTHROAT, Common (12); WARBLER, Hooded (3); WARBLER, Wilson's (6); WARBLER, Canada (12); CHAT, Yellow-breasted (1); TANAGER, Summer (2); SPARROW, Seaside (12); SPARROW species (1); CARDINAL, Northern (108); GROSBEAK, Blue (29); BUNTING, Indigo (13); BUNTING, Painted (6); DICKCISSEL (10); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (137); MEADOWLARK, Eastern (2); GRACKLE, Common (285); GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (78); GRACKLE, Great-tailed (104); COWBIRD, Brown-headed (66); ORIOLE, Orchard (12); ORIOLE, Baltimore (16); SPARROW, House (96); BISHOP, Orange (1); TOTAL (14294); Number of species (173); Number of Observers (16); Number of Parties (10); Number of Party-Hours (58.07); Party hours on foot (21.4); Miles on foot (21.15); Party-hours by automobile (37.17); Miles by automobile (630.3); Party-hours at feeders (1.5).
Participants: Althea Bythewood, Howard and Linda Davis, Frank Giglio, Joe Halbook, John Haynes, Margo Holst, Ray Jordan, D.J. Kava, Steve Mayes, Jeff Pittman, Sherrie Roden, Christine Sliva, Eric Sztraky, Ken Sztraky, John Whittle.

Bird Sightings – August 2006

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 john.whittle@lamar.edu or call (409) 880-8276 or fax to (409) 880-7977. 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." The range of dates for which the species was reported is shown in parentheses in a column before the sighting details or report summaries.

Commentary: August brings with it the tease of the fall migration to come. Perhaps the most interesting "sighting" was an unseen Black Rail calling every night for a number of days near the entrance to McFadden NWR. More on fall migration in next month's *Brown Pelican*

WHISTLING-DUCK, Blk-bellied	(5-20)	JEF 2 reps(5)
WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous	(5-16)	JEF 2 reps(3)
DUCK, Mottled	(13-27)	JEF 3 reps(23)
TEAL, Blue-winged	(13-27)	JEF 3 reps(545)
DUCK, Ruddy	(5-5)	JEF-TP 8/5(1) JAW
GREBE, Pied-billed	(5-27)	JEF 3 reps(7)
CORMORANT, Neotropic	(5-31)	JEF 6 reps(93)
ANHINGA	(13-27)	JEF 4 reps(4)
BITTERN, Least	(5-26)	JEF 2 reps(3)
HERON, Great Blue	(13-27)	JEF 3 reps(4)
EGRET, Great	(5-31)	JEF 7 reps(65)
EGRET, Snowy	(5-31)	JEF 7 reps(437)
HERON, Little Blue	(5-27)	JEF 5 reps(35)
HERON, Tricolored	(5-27)	JEF 4 reps(63)
EGRET, Cattle	(5-31)	JEF 11 reps(1762)
HERON, Green	(5-27)	JEF 6 reps(20)
NIGHT-HERON, Black-crown.	(5-27)	JEF 3 reps(7)
NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-cr.	(5-27)	JEF 3 reps(3)
IBIS, White	(5-27)	JEF 5 reps(193)
IBIS, White-faced	(13-27)	JEF 3 reps(8)
IBIS, Plegadis	(5-27)	JEF 4 reps(96)
SPOONBILL, Roseate	(5-13)	JEF 4 reps(22)
VULTURE, Black	(13-31)	JEF 4 reps(13)
VULTURE, Turkey	(13-31)	JEF 5 reps(8)
KITE, White-tailed	(13-26)	JEF 2 reps(2)
HAWK, Red-shouldered	(27-29)	JEF 2 reps(2)
HAWK, Red-tailed	(31-31)	JEF-SW 8/31(1) JAW
CARACARA, Crested	(13-13)	JEF 8/13(1) JAW
RAIL, Black MCF	(10-21)	JEF-MCFW 8/10-21(1)
RAIL, Clapper	(13-13)	JEF 1 rep(1)
GALLINULE, Purple	(5-27)	JEF-TP 8/5(2) JAW; JEF 8/13(1) JAW; JEF-TP 8/27(1) JAW
MOORHEN, Common	(5-27)	JEF 5 reps(31)
PLOVER, Semipalmated	(13-13)	JEF 8/13(5) JAW; JEF-TP 8/13(3) JAW
KILLDEER	(5-27)	JEF 6 reps(120)
STILT, Black-necked	(5-27)	JEF 7 reps(603)
AVOCET, American	(13-13)	JEF 8/13(1) JAW
SANDPIPER, Spotted	(5-26)	JEF 3 reps(5)
SANDPIPER, Solitary	(13-20)	JEF-TP 8/13(1) JAW; JEF-TP 8/20(1) JAW
YELLOWLEGS, Greater	(13-27)	JEF 5 reps(29)
WILLET	(26-26)	JEF 1 rep(3)
YELLOWLEGS, Lesser	(5-27)	JEF 3 reps(110)
SANDERLING	(26-26)	JEF 1 rep(2)
SANDPIPER, Semipalmated	(5-20)	JEF 3 reps(9)
SANDPIPER, Western	(5-13)	JEF 2 reps(26)
SANDPIPER, Peep	(13-13)	JEF 1 rep(2000)
SANDPIPER, Least	(5-20)	JEF 3 reps(1040)
SANDPIPER, Baird's	(13-13)	JEF-TP 8/13(2) JAW
SANDPIPER, Pectoral	(5-20)	JEF 3 reps(280)
SANDPIPER, Stilt	(5-20)	JEF-TP 8/5(18) JAW; JEF 8/13(250) JAW; JEF-TP 8/13(2) JAW; JEF-TP 8/20(12) JAW
DOWITCHER, Long-billed	(5-26)	JEF 4 reps(581)
DOWITCHER species	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(5)
PHALAROPE, Wilson's	(13-20)	JEF 8/13(20) JAW; JEF 8/20(3) JAW
GULL, Laughing	(5-27)	JEF 7 reps(320)
TERN, Least	(13-27)	JEF 3 reps(37)
TERN, Caspian	(13-13)	JEF 1 rep(2)
TERN, Black	(5-27)	JEF 6 reps(441)
TERN, Forster's	(5-27)	JEF 5 reps(56)
PIGEON, Rock	(1-25)	JEF 10 reps(85)
COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian	(6-20)	JEF 5 reps(22)
DOVE, White-winged	(1-30)	JEF 14 reps(87)
DOVE, Mourning	(3-31)	JEF 12 reps(208)
DOVE, Inca	(20-27)	JEF 2 reps(3)
CUCKOO, Yellow-billed	(13-31)	JEF 7 reps(10)
NIGHTHAWK, Common	(13-31)	JEF 3 reps(5)

SWIFT, Chimney	(2-30)	JEF 5 reps(7)
HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-thr.	(5-31)	HAI 1 rep(6); JEF 12 reps(60)
HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous	(26-31)	JEF-BMT 8/26(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 8/27(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 8/30(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 8/31(1) RHJ
KINGFISHER, Belted	(13-31)	JEF-TX87 8/13(1) SM; JEF-MCFW 8/26(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 8/31(1) JAW
WOODPECKER, Red-headed	(26-28)	HAI-SILS 8/28(1) DMW; JEF-BMT 8/26(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 8/27(1) RHJ
WOODPECKER, Red-bellied	(1-27)	JEF 5 reps(6)
WOODPECKER, Downy	(13-31)	JEF 3 reps(5)
WOODPECKER, Pileated	(28-28)	HAI 1 rep(1)
WOOD-PEWEE, Eastern	(13-31)	JEF 4 reps(7)
FLYCATCHER, Yellow-bellied	(5-20)	JEF-SRSP 8/5(1) DV; JEF-SW 8/5(1) DV; JEF-SRSP 8/13(1) SM; JEF-SW 8/20(1) DV
FLYCATCHER, Acadian	(13-13)	JEF 1 rep(1)
FLYCATCHER, Alder	(20-20)	JEF-SRSP 8/20(2) DV
FLYCATCHER, Alder	(20-20)	JEF 1 rep(2)
FLYCATCHER, Least	(13-31)	JEF-SRSP 8/13(4) SM; JEF-SW 8/13(2) SM; JEF-SRSP 8/20(1) DV; JEF-SRSP 8/31(1) JAW; JEF-SW 8/31(3) JAW
EMPIDONAX species	(26-26)	JEF 1 rep(2)
FLYCATCHER, Gt. Crested	(5-31)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 5 reps(14)
KINGBIRD, Eastern	(13-26)	JEF 5 reps(13)
FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tailed	(13-16)	JEF 2 reps(4)
SHRIKE, Loggerhead	(6-27)	JEF 7 reps(16)
VIREO, White-eyed	(5-27)	JEF 2 reps(2)
VIREO, Yellow-throat	(28-28)	HAI 1 rep(2)
JAY, Blue	(1-31)	JEF 11 reps(22)
CROW, American	(13-13)	JEF 1 rep(3)
CROW, Fish	(5-20)	JEF 2 reps(3)
CROW, species	(1-19)	JEF 2 reps(3)
MARTIN, Purple	(6-19)	JEF 2 reps(10)
SWALLOW, Tree	(20-27)	JEF-TP 8/20(10) JAW; JEF-TP 8/27(150) JAW
SWALLOW, Bank	(27-27)	JEF-TP 8/27(28) JAW
SWALLOW, Barn	(6-27)	JEF 11 reps(79)
SWALLOW species	(5-20)	JEF 2 reps(9)
CHICKADEE, Carolina	(20-26)	JEF 2 reps(6)
WREN, Carolina	(5-27)	JEF 3 reps(3)
GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray	(5-31)	JEF 11 reps(47)
ROBIN, American	(2-31)	JEF 12 reps(36)
CATBIRD, Gray	(26-31)	JEF 3 reps(3)
MOCKINGBIRD, Northern	(1-30)	JEF 16 reps(61)
STARLING, European	(1-27)	JEF 8 reps(267)
WARBLER, Blue-winged	(20-20)	JEF-SW 8/20(1) DV
PARULA, Northern	(5-5)	JEF 1 rep(1)
WARBLER, Yellow	(5-31)	HAI 1 rep(5); JEF 6 reps(34)
WARBLER, Yellow-thr.	(20-20)	JEF-SRSP 8/20(1) DV
WARBLER, Prairie	(5-20)	JEF-SRSP 8/5(1) DV; JEF-SRSP 8/13(1) SM; JEF-SRSP 8/20(1) DV; JEF-SW 8/20(1) DV
WARBLER, Black-and-white	(5-20)	JEF 2 reps(6)
WARBLER, Prothonotary	(5-20)	JEF 3 reps(3)
WATERTHRUSH, Northern	(20-31)	JEF-SRSP 8/20(1) DV; JEF-SW 8/31(1) JAW
WATERTHRUSH, Louisiana	(20-20)	JEF-TP 8/20(2) JAW
WARBLER, Kentucky	(20-20)	JEF 1 rep(2)
WARBLER, Mourning	(20-20)	JEF-SW 8/20(1) DV
YELLOWTHROAT, Common	(5-20)	JEF 3 reps(10)
WARBLER, Hooded	(5-28)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 1 rep(3)
WARBLER, Canada	(20-31)	JEF-SW 8/20(2) DV; JEF-SW 8/26(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 8/31(1) JAW
CHAT, Yellow-breasted	(20-31)	JEF-SRSP 8/20(1) DV; JEF-BMT 8/31(1) RHJ
CARDINAL, Northern	(13-27)	JEF 4 reps(8)
GROSBEAK, Rose-breasted	(26-26)	JEF-SRSP 8/26(1) JAW

(continued on p.7)

Field Trip to Smith Point and Vicinity – 23 September 2003

Birding is always something of a gamble. Of course, that's part of the attraction, you never know what you will find during a day in the field. Unfortunately, sometimes, if the weather is not right or if the birds just don't cooperate, you don't find much. The annual field trip to the Smith Point Hawk Watch seems to be one of the biggest gambles in our birding year.

Predicting when migrating birds will show up in a given spot is as much art as science, still, we always try to plan our Hawk Watch trip to (as close as possible) coincide with the peak of the Broad-winged Hawk migration around September 25. Smith Point is a great place to watch hawks, as the migrating raptors following the coast get "trapped" on this peninsula and usually retreat back the way they came giving good opportunities for observation. Even with that, however, the number of birds present is highly dependent on weather conditions. Migrating hawks are usually most abundant on a clear day just after a front comes through while there are still north winds. On a day with strong south winds and/or rain, few, if any, birds will be present.

Past field trips have run the gamut from terrific to terrible. We have had days when there were thousands of Broad-wings to look at along with Red-tailed and Swainson's Hawks passing through and Peregrine Falcons and Merlins buzzing the tower. On the other hand, we have had rain outs where nothing was seen. Last year, the whole trip was cancelled because the date happened to coincide with a little storm called Hurricane Rita.

Or maybe not. The 2006 Smith Point field trip dawned with clear skies but strong winds out of the south – not good hawk migrating weather! Still, hopeful for a miracle, a handful of Golden Triangle Audubon birders made the trip. Just maybe some birds would turn up against the odds! But it was not to be. Hawks were scarce that morning from the Smith Point tower. A Cooper's Hawk blasted into nearby trees looking for a meal while an American Kestrel battled the winds to move forward. A pair of Northern Harriers hugged the coastline but not much else in the way of raptors passed by in the morning. The day was not completely without highlights, however. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds battled with each other over the feeder set up at the tower while Blue-gray Gnatcatchers gave their thin, whining calls from the oaks nearby. Perhaps the best scene of the day was the flock of Magnificent Frigatebirds that passed back and forth in front of the tower all morning long. The flock contained up to fifty birds at one point including at least two adult males. This is more Frigatebirds than any of the group could ever remember seeing in one place in the U.S.

But with the object of our trip (raptors) in short supply, the group decided to search elsewhere for birds. The back roads around Smith Point were generous giving all looks at a pair of Couch's Kingbirds that apparently nested in the area this summer. A few raptors were picked up in the vicinity including a Merlin, a Broad-winged Hawk and a Red-tailed Hawk. A look at the Spoonbill R.V. Park produced a few shorebirds including Ruddy Turnstones and Least Sandpipers. Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge was initiated.

Anahuac NWR is certainly one of the best birding locations on the upper Texas coast on most days. On this day, possibly because of the winds or other, unknown factors, the refuge did not give up many birds. An Osprey perched obligingly on a pole near the road while various egrets and herons were easily seen in the marsh. Shoveler Pond held no ducks but a few Blue-winged Teal and Mottled Ducks were spotted along the drive. Pied-billed Grebes and Common Moorhens were easily picked out along with a group of Black-necked Stilts. But all in all it was not one of Anahuac's finest performances.

On that note, the field trip was officially ended. Maybe next year, we will hit the time and the weather just right and see the skies filled with kettles of hawks, Anhingas, Wood Storks and frigatebirds. There's only one way to see such a spectacle and that is to keep trying!

The following birds were recorded on the field trip:

Pied-billed Grebe (3), Brown Pelican (21), Neotropic Cormorant (2), Magnificent Frigatebird (50), Great Blue Heron (1), Great Egret (54), Snowy Egret (27), Little Blue Heron (2), Tricolored Heron (5), Cattle Egret (165), White Ibis (25), Plegadis sp. (25), Roseate Spoonbill (1), Black Vulture (6), Turkey Vulture (27), Mottled Duck (3), Blue-winged Teal (3), Osprey (1), White-tailed Kite (1), Northern Harrier (2), Sharp-shinned Hawk (1), Broad-winged Hawk (1), Swainson's Hawk (1), Red-tailed Hawk (1), Crested Caracara (1), American Kestrel (2), Merlin (1), Common Moorhen (18), Killdeer (6), Black-necked Stilt (12), American Oystercatcher (1), Ruddy Turnstone (5), Least Sandpiper (10), Laughing Gull (32), Mourning Dove (11), Ruby-throated Hummingbird (20), Belted Kingfisher (3), Downy Woodpecker (1), Eastern Wood-Pewee (1), Couch's Kingbird (2), Eastern Kingbird (1), Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (8), Loggerhead Shrike (10), Blue Jay (3), Barn Swallow (33), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (2), Northern Mockingbird (4), Yellow Warbler (1), Northern Cardinal (1), Blue Grosbeak (1), Red-winged Blackbird (20), Eastern Meadowlark (1), Great-tailed Grackle (25), Brown-headed Cowbird (30).

Steve Mayes

August 2006 Bird Sightings (continued from p.6)

BUNTING, Indigo	(20-26)	JEF 2 reps(3)
BUNTING, Painted	(13-31)	JEF 3 reps(10)
DICKCISSEL	(13-28)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 2 reps(27)
BLACKBIRD, Red-winged	(5-27)	JEF 5 reps(67)
MEADOWLARK species	(6-19)	JEF 3 reps(4)
GRACKLE, Common	(3-23)	JEF 4 reps(20)
GRACKLE, Boat-tailed	(5-31)	JEF 5 reps(52)
GRACKLE, Great-tailed	(1-27)	JEF 12 reps(200)
COWBIRD, Brown-headed	(6-20)	JEF 3 reps(41)
ORIOLE, Orchard	(13-31)	JEF 4 reps(40)
ORIOLE, Baltimore	(31-31)	JEF-SW 8/31(1) JAW
FINCH, House	(29-29)	JEF-BMT 8/29(1) RHJ
SPARROW, House	(1-25)	JEF 11 reps(67)
Number of Species		130
Number of Individuals		12688

County Abbreviations:

HAI — Hardin; JEF — Jefferson

Location Codes:

BMT — Beaumont; MCFW — McFaddin NWR; NEDR — Nederland; PI — Pleasure Island, Port Arthur; SILS — Silsbee; SRSP — Sea Rim State Park; SW — Sabine Woods; TP — Tyrrell Park incl. Cattail Marsh; TX87 — Texas 87 Pt. Arthur-Sabine Pass-Sea Rim SP

Observer Abbreviations

DMW — Debby McWhorter; DV — Don Verser; JAW — John Whittle; MCF — McFaddin and Texas Pt NWRs (Patrick Walther); RHJ — Rose Ann and Harrison Jordan; SM — Steve Mayes

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Unfortunately, almost all the local and regional telephone Rare Bird Alerts have been discontinued in favor of various Internet based means of distribution.

The Texas-wide Rare Bird Alert, maintained by Houston Audubon Society, is available on their web-site at <http://www.houstonaudubon.org/> and each new alert is posted on the TEXBIRDS listserv. The archives of this listserv can be accessed at <http://listserv.uh.edu/archives/tebirds.html> It is not necessary to subscribe to the listserv to view the archives.

Transcriptions of many current and recent email alerts are available on the Siler's Birding on the Net at <http://birdingonthe.net/hotmail.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 very early issues.

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