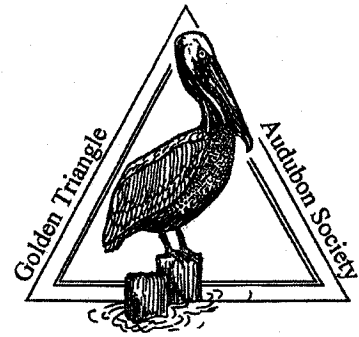


# The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 15 No. 1

January 2009

**Membership Meeting**  
**Thursday, January 15, 2009**  
**Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont**  
**7:00 PM,**  
**Bluebirds**

Jennifer Fleming currently serves as a member of the board of the Texas Bluebird Society. She resides in Orange with husband Johnny and works at Diagnostic Health in Port Arthur as a Radiologic Technologist. She has been "bluebirding" for approximately 6 years. In addition to being a bluebird enthusiast, Jennifer enjoys amateur photography and spending time with her three grandchildren. She is also a Master Gardener.

We will plan on having the doors open by 6:00 p.m. and the program will start at 7:00 p.m. sharp.

## Bluebird Boxes

At our January meeting, we will give away at least five bluebird houses to people who have suitable location on their own property. The location should meet the requirements below. The recipients should understand what is involved in upkeep of maintaining a bluebird house, and will need to have the resources to purchase or build a pole to place it on. One of our members, John Park, has offered to help people if necessary. Preference will be given to those in an area that is known to have bluebirds. We thank Charles Post, who has put these together for Golden Triangle Audubon at just the cost of the materials. If you are not early enough at the meeting to receive one of the free bluebird houses, you can join the Texas Bluebird Society for \$15.00 and receive a free bluebird house. They will have a table set up at our meeting.

When siting a bluebird nest box, there are five important points to consider.

- The box should be mounted on a metal pole. A metal pole allows for easy installation of a predator guard or baffle, and makes it easy to place the box in an area that is safe for the birds.
- The box should be mounted 3 to 5 feet above the ground. This is high enough that most predators cannot jump to the box to harm the nest. This height also allows for convenient nest monitoring and cleaning.
- A predator guard should be installed just below the nest box. This will deter most predators, especially raccoons and snakes, which otherwise have no problem climbing up a pole to get to eggs or young inside the box.
- The box should be sited at least 100 feet away from any trees or brush. The open areas are free of any threat of an attack that may come from predators living in the brush. Bluebirds prefer wide open spaces.
- Perches should be provided. A simple limb stuck in the ground will provide perches to allow the birds to survey the nesting site.

## *The Brown Pelican*

Vol. 15, No.1 January 2009

Golden Triangle  
Audubon Society

See Web Site for more  
information  
[www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org)

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3015 Nashville Ave.

Nederland, TX 77627-6749

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## Calendar of Events

**Thursday January 15. Membership Meeting.** Speaker will be Jennifer Fleming, Texas Bluebird Society on Bluebirds.

**Saturday January 17. Field Trip to West Harris County.** Full details in next month's issue.

**Saturday January 17, 2008 Field Trip to Katy Prairie/West Harris County.** This has become one of our most popular field trips. Houston is rapidly advancing towards the heart of this excellent birding area, with its wintering waterfowl, sparrows (including Fox and Harris's) and raptors (including Caracara, Bald Eagle and White-tailed Hawk). A Pyrrhuloxia is being seen again this winter. Kiskadees may still be in the area. Many years, Couch's Kingbirds are found in winter in the area. Pine Siskins were found in Bear Creek Park early in December

The meeting time and place will be as in previous years: 7:30 a.m. at the Randall's Supermarket on the northeast corner of Barker-Cypress Road and Clay Road, west of Houston. To reach this location, take IH-10 west through Houston and across Loop 610 on the west side to Barker-Cypress Road – exit 748. This exit is 15 miles west of Loop 610, is beyond Beltway 8, and just beyond Highway 6. Turn right (north) on Barker Cypress and proceed just under three miles to the Intersection with Clay.

Please be sure to check with Steve Mayes at the Membership Meeting on January 15 or check the web-site at [www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org) or call Steve Mayes at 722-5807 two or three days before to confirm details. It is a two and one-half hour 105-mile drive from the Golden Triangle.

Car pooling from Beaumont is desirable. The fewer cars we have in the rural areas of west Harris County, the better. Maps and the opportunity to arrange car pooling will be available at the January Membership meeting.

Should you be late, the plan is to first proceed to Bear Creek Park. We will probably enter the park by turning south off Clay Road, just east of the golf course.

**February 13 through February 16. Great Backyard Bird Count.**  
Details p.3 and at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

**Thursday February 19. Membership meeting.** Program (tentative) Shirley and Sid Rucker. "Come Fly with Me" (postponed from the November meeting).

**Saturday February 21. Field Trip to Sheldon Lake.** We are planning on repeating this very successful field trip, but look for confirmation in next month's *Brown Pelican*.

The park entrance and Environmental Learning Center is at 15315 Beaumont Highway (Business 90) at Park Road 138. We will meet at 8:15 a.m. Normal travel time from the Golden Triangle should be about one hour 30 minutes to one hour 40 minutes. It is about 85 miles from Beaumont, and a little further from mid and south county.

If you approach on US 90, in Crosby, take the Beaumont Highway (Business 90, not the "main" US 90) and proceed about 5 miles to the park entrance to the right. If you reach Beltway 8 you have gone too far.

If you prefer IH10, exit on Beltway 8 and turn north. After just under four miles cross under US 90. Go another half mile or so and turn right on Business 90 (Beaumont Highway) and proceed less than a mile to the park entrance on the left.

The park does not open until 8:00 a.m. The park telephone number is 281-456-2800.

**Saturday February 28. Sabine Woods Work Day.** We are planning a third work day at Sabine Woods. Please contact us or check our website before setting out for this work day. The woods were badly beaten by the storm surge from Hurricane Ike. Much was accomplished on the first two work days in October and December.

On this work day, we will plan to aggressively attack a number of invasive exotic species that are accessible in the absence of underbrush. We will plan on some more trail maintenance, especially in the eastern and western sections of the woods. We have one surviving bench to reinstall, and perhaps other similar tasks to accomplish.

We will plan to start around 7:30 a.m., and will probably work until noon or later.

Please bring heavy duty work gloves and insect repellent, and tools to do trail maintenance, especially loppers. We do plan to provide refreshments, but please bring water or other liquid refreshments just in case we run out.

## Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. **We need volunteers to bring items for all the remaining spring 2009 meetings.** 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 Jennifer Armacost at (409) 790-7222 (or email her at [armacostj@yahoo.com](mailto:armacostj@yahoo.com)) as far in advance 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, or there is no other date, 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.



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](mailto:estx@earthshare-texas.org).

## Join the Great Backyard Bird Count

### Count for Fun, Count for the Future

*New York, NY and Ithaca, NY—* Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 13 through 16, 2009.

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation. Participants count birds and report their sightings online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

"The Great Backyard Bird Count benefits both birds and people. It's a great example of citizen science: Anyone who can identify even a few species can contribute to the body of knowledge that is used to inform conservation efforts to protect birds and biodiversity," said Audubon Education VP, Judy Braus. "Families, teachers, children and all those who take part in GBBC get a chance to improve their observation skills, enjoy nature, and have a great time counting for fun, counting for the future."

Anyone can take part, from novice bird watchers to experts, by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). Participants can also explore what birds others are finding in their backyards—whether in their own neighborhood or thousands of miles away. Additional online resources include tips to help identify birds, a photo gallery, and special materials for educators.

The data these "citizen scientists" collect helps researchers understand bird population trends, information that is critical for effective conservation. Their efforts enable everyone to see what would otherwise be impossible: a comprehensive picture of where birds are in late winter and how their numbers

and distribution compare with previous years. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists.

"The GBBC has become a vital link in the arsenal of continent-wide bird-monitoring projects," said Cornell Lab of Ornithology director, John Fitzpatrick. "With more than a decade of data now in hand, the GBBC has documented the fine-grained details of late-winter bird distributions better than any project in history, including some truly striking changes just over the past decade."

Each year, in addition to entering their tallies, participants submit thousands of digital images for the GBBC photo contest. Many are featured in the popular online gallery. Participants in the 2009 count are also invited to upload their bird videos to YouTube; some will also be featured on the GBBC web site. Visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) to learn more.

## Sabine Pass Donations

Rose Ann Jordan spoke with an employee of Sabine Pass ISD and asked what we could do for the residents of Sabine Pass. The needs are great, but this person suggested that some groups are "adopting" different families to help out. Since we are such a small organization, Rose Ann thought that maybe we could handle helping out one of the elderly couples that lost everything. In the February newsletter, we plan to list various items that you can donate because we realize there are some people who would rather purchase specific items rather than donate money, but for now we will accept donations through the mail or at the meeting. Our first donation to one of the Sabine Pass families was very much appreciated and we were so glad that people saw the need and responded quickly. This will be an ongoing process that will probably last from January until March. The Sabine Pass employee seemed pleasantly surprised that a bird-watching group cared about their community. Please either give your donation to Christine Sliva or mail it to Golden Triangle Audubon at P. O. Box 1292, Nederland, Texas 77627. Thank you.

*Jana Whittle*

## Turkey Creek CBC

The Turkey Creek Christmas Bird Count, sponsored by the Big Thicket National Preserve, was held on December 15th, 2008. While the first two or three hours were conducted in pleasant weather conditions, a strong cold front then passed through much earlier than forecast. The temperature fell sharply, and there was some light rain. Ten observers found 3747 birds of 64 species, totals which are close to the recent averages for this count.

Osprey was recorded for only the third time on this count, but no Red-tailed Hawks were seen. This was the first time this species was missed since 1999, but reflects the lack of open country in the count circle. Perhaps not surprising after two major hurricanes in three years, the number of woodpeckers of almost all the resident species were noticeably up. The absence of Loggerhead Shrike again reflects the lack of open country, while missing White-eyed Vireo is less easily explained. Tree Swallows were found for only the second time, as the species seemingly expands in winter in East Texas. White-breasted Nuthatches are very scarce in the area, and it was nice to find one. A large number of Sedge Wrens were perhaps displaced from the hurricane damage habitat along the coast. Missing Blue-gray Gnatcatchers was surprising. We find Hermit Thrushes after missing the species last year. American Pipit and Palm Warbler were new to the count. Eastern Towhees – three of them – were the first in four years, and there was a good variety of sparrows. This count has its unusual features, and we had no European Starlings, no House Sparrows, and no grackles. This was the third consecutive year of no grackles!

Birds seen: DUCK, Wood (2); GREBE, Pied-billed (2); HERON, Great Blue (3); EGRET, Great (3); EGRET, Snowy (1); VULTURE, Black (42); VULTURE, Turkey (78); OSPREY (2); HAWK, Red-shouldered (7); KESTREL, American (10); COOT, American (3); KILLDEER (71); DOVE, Mourning (63); DOVE, Inca (5); KINGFISHER, Belted (2); WOODPECKER, Red-headed (1); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (54); SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied (15); WOODPECKER, Downy (32); WOODPECKER, Hairy (7); FLICKER, Northern (4); FLICKER, N. (Yellow shafted) (2); WOODPECKER, Pileated (14); PHOEBE, Eastern (19); VIREO, Blue-headed (9); JAY, Blue (66); CROW, American (121); SWALLOW, Tree (5); CHICKADEE, Carolina (112); TITMOUSE, Tufted (44); NUTHATCH, White-breasted (1); NUTHATCH, Brown-headed (5); CREEPER, Brown (4); WREN, Carolina (26); WREN, House (9); WREN, Winter (4); WREN, Sedge (12); KINGLET, Golden-crowned (6); KINGLET, Ruby-crowned (57); BLUEBIRD, Eastern (73); THRUSH, Hermit (5); ROBIN, American (1560); CATBIRD, Gray (4); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (20); THRASHER, Brown (5); WAXWING, Cedar (202); PIPIT, American (1); WARBLER, Orange-crowned (6); WARBLER, Yellow-rumped (222); WARBLER, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) (28); WARBLER, Pine (79); WARBLER, Palm (1); TOWHEE, Eastern (3); SPARROW, Chipping (241); SPARROW, Savannah (5); SPARROW, LeConte's (1); SPARROW, Song (1); SPARROW, Lincoln's (1); SPARROW, Swamp (10); SPARROW, White-throated (69); JUNCO, Dark-eyed (17); JUNCO, Dark-eyed (Slate-colored.) (8); CARDINAL, Northern (146); MEADOWLARK, Eastern (2); GOLDFINCH, American (114); SPECIES, total (64); INDIVIDUALS, total (3747); Number of observers (10); Number of parties (5); Total Party hours (39.93); Total Party miles (161.6). Participants: Bruce Bishop, Stephanie Burgess, Sherry Gibson, Rose Ann and Harrison Jordan, Steve Mayes, Amy and Dave Roemer, Ken Szrakay, John Whittle.

*John A. Whittle*

## Beech Creek CBC

The Beech Creek Christmas Count, sponsored by the Big Thicket National Preserve, was conducted on December 27th, 2008. The weather was not entirely cooperative, although the first three hours were dry, if a little windy in exposed places. Light showers gave way to some heavier rain late in the day.

The total of seventy-four species was on the low side of normal for this count. Most notable was the near complete absence of ducks. This was somewhat puzzling, as Steinhagen Lake has now been back at its normal level for well over a year after a drawdown. But there were no Northern Shovelers or Northern Pintail or Green-winged Teal or Canvasback or Ring-necked Duck, all species we have come to expect. American White Pelicans were back, as were American Coots in large numbers, but there were no gulls or terns.

We are disappointed if we don't see Bald Eagles on this count. We are reporting two, although there must be, as always on a relatively small lake, some suspicion that two parties may have seen the same bird.

The bird of the count was undoubtedly a Couch's Kingbird, seen late in the day on County Road 4360 about one mile northeast of FM2992 in Tyler County. This location is just north of the northwest corner of the Beech Creek Unit of the Big Thicket National Preserve. This bird was induced to call, and may well be occupying at winter territory at that location.

Birds Seen: GOOSE, Snow (2); GOOSE, Snow (Blue) (1); DUCK, Wood (6); WIGEON, American (13); MALLARD (2); GREBE, Pied-billed (19); PELICAN, American White (51); CORMORANT, Double-crested (8); CORMORANT, [species] (83); ANHINGA (4); HERON, Great Blue (4); EGRET, Great (21); EGRET, Snowy (8); HERON, Tricolored (1); IBIS, White (4); VULTURE, Black (27); VULTURE, Turkey (59); EAGLE, Bald (2); HARRIER, Northern (2); HAWK, Red-shouldered (3); HAWK, Red-tailed (1); KESTREL, American (8); MOORHEN, Common (7); COOT, American (3780); KILLDEER (10); SANDPIPER, Spotted (2); SNIPE, Wilson's (1); COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian (12); DOVE, Mourning (7); DOVE, Inca (2); KINGFISHER, Belted (6); WOODPECKER, Red-headed (1); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (52); SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied (9); WOODPECKER, Downy (22); FLICKER, Northern (9); WOODPECKER, Pileated (9); PHOEBE, Eastern (34); KINGBIRD, Couch's (1); VIREO, Blue-headed (1); JAY, Blue (60); CROW, American (101); CHICKADEE, Carolina (80); TITMOUSE, Tufted (21); NUTHATCH, Brown-headed (3); CREEPER, Brown (3); WREN, Carolina (27); WREN, House (3); WREN, Winter (1); WREN, Sedge (3); KINGLET, Golden-crowned (14); KINGLET, Ruby-crowned (99); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (10); BLUEBIRD, Eastern (82); ROBIN, American (751); CATBIRD, Gray (2); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (19); THRASHER, Brown (5); STARLING, European (16); WAXWING, Cedar (75); WARBLER, Orange-crowned (2); WARBLER, Yellow-rumped (71); WARBLER, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) (89); WARBLER, Pine (62); SPARROW, Chipping (246); SPARROW, Savannah (1); SPARROW, Song (9); SPARROW, Lincoln's (11); SPARROW, Swamp (9); SPARROW, White-throated (80); JUNCO, Dark-eyed (1); JUNCO, Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) (21); CARDINAL, Northern (152); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (254); MEADOWLARK, Eastern (20); GRACKLE, Common (439); GOLDFINCH, American (62); SPARROW, House (12); SPECIES, total (74); Number of Individuals (7210); Number of observers (9); Parties (4); Party-hours total (30.25); Party-miles total (134.45). Participants: Bill Bailey, Bruce Bishop, Kathleen Brown, Sherry Gibson, Rose Ann and Harrison Jordan, Dave Roemer, Jana and John Whittle.

*John A. Whittle*

## Bird Sightings – November 2008

**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. 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:** An uneventful month, with good sparrow numbers, a late Swainson's Hawk, but low waterfowl numbers. There is continuing evidence that the area can support a good population of wintering hummingbirds. Making flowers and feeders available for several years in a row seems to be the key to attracting them. While there are always a few lingering Ruby-throated Hummingbirds early in the season, there are more western species, especially Rufous, and the occasional Buff-bellied.

GOOSE, Snow	(27-27)	JEF 11/27(10) JAW		
GADWALL	(1-1)	JEF 11/1(5) JAW		
WIGEON, American	(1-1)	JEF 11/1(1) JAW		
TEAL, Blue-winged	(1-1)	JEF 11/1(1) JAW		
SHOVELER, Northern	(1-1)	JEF 11/1(30) JAW		
PINTAIL, Northern	(1-1)	JEF 11/1(6) JAW		
TEAL, Green-winged	(1-1)	JEF 11/1(15) JAW		
GREBE, Pied-billed	(1-27)	JEF 11/1(1) JAW; JEF 11/27(2) JAW		
HERON, Great Blue	(1-27)	HAI-SILS 11/13(1) MG; JEF 11/1(2) JAW; JEF 11/27(2) JAW		
EGRET, Great	(1-27)	JEF 11/1(4) JAW; JEF 11/27(1) JAW		
EGRET, Snowy	(1-27)	JEF 11/1(2) JAW; JEF 11/27(1) JAW		
IBIS, White	(1-27)	JEF 11/1(10) JAW; JEF 11/27(25) JAW		
IBIS, White-faced	(1-1)	JEF 11/1(1) JAW		
VULTURE, Black	(3-13)	HAI 4 reps(33)		
VULTURE, Turkey	(1-27)	HAI 5 reps(11); JEF 2 reps(14)		
HARRIER, Northern	(1-27)	JEF 11/1(7) JAW; JEF 11/27(10) JAW		
HAWK, Sharp-shinned	(27-27)	JEF 11/27(1) JAW		
HAWK, Cooper's	(1-18)	JEF 11/1(1) JAW; JEF-BMT 11/3(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/18(1) RHJ		
HAWK, Red-shouldered	(1-27)	HAI 2 reps(2); JEF 8 reps(9)		
HAWK, Swainson's	(2-2)	ORA-ORG 11/2(1) RHJ		
HAWK, Red-tailed	(1-27)	JEF 4 reps(34)		
KESTREL, American	(1-27)	JEF 11/1(18) JAW; JEF 11/27(15) JAW; JEF-BMT 11/27(1) RHJ		
MERLIN	(27-27)	JEF 11/27(1) JAW		
FALCON, Peregrine	(1-1)	JEF 11/1(1) JAW		
COOT, American	(1-1)	JEF 11/1(3) JAW		
CRANE, Sandhill	(27-27)	JEF 11/27(916) JAW		
PLOVER, Black-bellied	(1-1)	JEF 11/1(2) JAW		
KILLDEER	(1-27)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 2 reps(25)		
STILT, Black-necked	(1-1)	JEF 11/1(6) JAW		
YELLOWLEGS, Greater	(1-27)	JEF 11/1(18) JAW; JEF 11/27(34) JAW		
YELLOWLEGS, Lesser	(1-27)	JEF 11/1(8) JAW; JEF 11/27(8) JAW		
SANDPIPER, Western	(1-27)	JEF 11/1(22) JAW; JEF 11/27(6) JAW		
SANDPIPER, Least	(1-1)	JEF 11/1(7) JAW		
DUNLIN	(1-27)	JEF 11/1(1) JAW; JEF 11/27(200) JAW		
DOWITCHER, Long-billed	(1-27)	JEF 11/1(100) JAW; JEF 11/27(3) JAW		
PIGEON, Rock	(1-26)	HAI 5 reps(224)		
COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian	(1-27)	HAI 4 reps(11); JEF 3 reps(36)		
DOVE, White-winged	(4-27)	JEF 4 reps(15)		
DOVE, Mourning	(1-27)	HAI 6 reps(46); JEF 3 reps(233)		
DOVE, Inca	(4-28)	HAI 17 reps(31)		
HUMMINGBIRD, Buff-bellied	(1-1)	JEF-BMT 11/1(1) RHJ		
HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-thr.	(2-2)	JEF-NEDR 11/2(1) JAW		
HUMMINGBIRD, Archilochus	(23-23)	JEF-NEDR 11/23(1) JAW		
HUMMINGBIRD, Broad-tailed	(6-20)	JEF-BMT 11/6(0) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/7(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/18(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/20(1) RHJ		
HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous	(23-28)	JEF-NEDR 11/23(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 11/24(1) JFW; JEF-NEDR 11/28(1) JAW		
HUMMINGBIRD species	(1-30)	JEF 10 reps(12)		
KINGFISHER, Belted	(1-27)	JEF 11/1(1) JAW; JEF 11/27(2) JAW		
WOODPECKER, Red-bellied	(3-27)	HAI 12 reps(24); JEF 1 rep(2)		
SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied	(2-27)	JEF-BMT 11/2(1) RHJ; JEF 11/27(1) JAW		
WOODPECKER, Downy	(1-30)	HAI 6 reps(6); JEF 22 reps(23)		
FLICKER, Northern	(9-26)	HAI 10 reps(22)		
WOODPECKER, Pileated	(3-28)	HAI 4 reps(5); JEF 2 reps(2)		
PHOEBE, Eastern	(1-27)	HAI 5 reps(5); JEF 2 reps(29)		
FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tailed	(1-1)	JEF 11/1(3) JAW		
SHRIKE, Loggerhead	(1-27)	HAI-SILS 11/6(1) MG; JEF 11/1(3) JAW; JEF-BMT 11/26(1) JAW; JEF 11/27(16) JAW		
VIREO, Yellow-throated	(17-17)	HAI-SILS 11/17(1) MG		
JAY, Blue	(3-27)	HAI 5 reps(10); JEF 2 reps(6)		
CROW, American	(7-24)	HAI 2 reps(10)		
SWALLOW, Tree	(1-27)	JEF 11/1(137) JAW; JEF 11/27(40) JAW		
CHICKADEE, Carolina	(6-29)	HAI 14 reps(81); JEF 1 rep(1)		
TITMOUSE, Tufted	(8-27)	HAI 8 reps(24); JEF 1 rep(1)		
CREEPER, Brown	(26-26)	HAI-SILS 11/26(1) MG		
WREN, Carolina	(12-28)	HAI 6 reps(12)		
WREN, House	(26-27)	JEF-BMT 11/26(1) JAW; JEF 11/27(2) JAW		
KINGLET, Ruby-crowned	(3-27)	HAI 7 reps(10); JEF 6 reps(11)		
GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray	(3-27)	JEF-BMT 11/3(2) RHJ; JEF 11/27(1) JAW		
BLUEBIRD, Eastern	(6-25)	HAI 3 reps(9); JEF 1 rep(1)		
MOCKINGBIRD, Northern	(1-27)	HAI 9 reps(22); JEF 4 reps(26)		
THRASHER, Brown	(7-21)	HAI-SILS 11/7(1) MG; HAI-SILS 11/16(1) MG; HAI-SILS 11/17(1) MG; HAI-SILS 11/19(1) MG; HAI-SILS 11/21(1) MG; JEF-BMT 11/17(1) RHJ		
STARLING, European	(1-27)	HAI 3 reps(33); JEF 2 reps(152)		
PIPIT, American	(27-27)	JEF 11/27(3) JAW		
WARBLER, Orange-crowned	(1-30)	HAI-SILS 11/17(2) MG; JEF-BMT 11/1(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/2(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/20(1) RHJ		

(continued on page 7)

## Sea Rim State Park CBC – 4 January 2009

The 2008-09 Sea Rim State Park Christmas Bird Count was scheduled for Saturday January 3rd, 2009. Unfortunately, a major traffic accident around 6:30 a.m. on Highway 87 near the Valero Refinery led to the Highway being closed for about five hours. Faced with this, with only three parties already in the Sabine Pass area, and only one other party able to reach its assigned areas, we decided that the best course of action was to postpone the count until the following day. We very much regret that there were six people who had other commitments on the following day and were unable to participate. We do very much appreciate the 18 people who did make the early start two days in a row!

The weather was more of less cooperative. There was sea fog in the early morning, and a couple of isolated small showers during the late morning. But the cold front stayed north of the count circle until well after sundown, and none of the heavy rain it produced in Beaumont late that afternoon affected the count circle, which is almost all south of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. The temperature remained between 60 and 70 degrees all day.

Again, we received magnificent cooperation from the wildlife areas and refuges. Patrick Walther, the biologist at McFaddin and Texas Point National Wildlife Refuges provided access and transportation along the beach at Texas Point and an air boat to survey the areas inside Texas Point NWR and the part of McFaddin NWR that is in the count circle. Jim Sutherlin of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) allowed us to access the J. D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area, and Justin Rhodes, Director of Region 4 of the TPWD Parks Division gave us permission to enter the otherwise closed Sea Rim State Park.

Almost all areas within the count circle took brutal blows with Hurricane Ike on September 13th, 2008. The storm surge of that hurricane covered literally the entire count circle. At the shoreline, the surge was 18 feet. The vegetation in the coastal marshes is generally of salt tolerant species, because the areas quite frequently experience salt water intrusion. But higher areas do not, and the salt water top-killed all the underbrush, and probably damaged many trees. Only time will tell how bad the tree damage is. The coastal dunes were leveled, and there was significant erosion along much of the beach. From an ecological point of view, the habitat is currently much changed. It will recover, probably much faster than the man made infrastructure, which, in many areas was completely wiped out.

Although there can be little statistical significance attached to a single count because of the vagaries of short-term climatic and weather conditions unrelated to the state of the habitat, this count may have been the most important Sea Rim count ever, and will be even more so as we conduct future counts over the next few years as the vegetation recovers. Nevertheless, it is, of course, tempting to draw conclusions from the results of the count. We will confine ourselves to a few generalizations, and point out some of the unusual features. The next few years will indicate whether these are permanent or just short-term temporary changes or something in between.

Everyone initially wondered about the waterfowl, but, quite frankly, we do not see much in the count totals that is unusual. If anything, the numbers of most ducks are up! We know hunters in many, but not all, areas, are complaining about low numbers of ducks, yet we found at least as many ducks on the refuges and wildlife areas as we usually do. True, they were mostly in areas off-limits to hunting, but after a century or so of selectively killing the less-wary individuals, one surely must expect populations to become more wary of humans, especially those firing guns. Shorebird populations – by this we mean the true shorebirds, the beach birds – undoubtedly suffered massive disruption in feeding and roosting locations during and immediately after a storm, but already there is likely to be near normal food, and, indeed, the beach avifauna was reasonably normal. We did see some localized concentrations and absences, but taken over the entire ten plus miles of beach in the circle, things were not noticeably abnormal. The other shorebirds – the waders – have always been very variable depending on the amount and location of suitable inland shallow water and mud flats. The land birds, especially the Passerine species, were clearly not as numerous as normal. Particularly, many sparrow species were way down or absent. There were sparrows of the species which frequent saline environments, but in significantly reduced numbers.

The very preliminary tally shows 139 species, but there were a fair number of species that have to be "count week" birds because they were seen on January 3rd while those that made it down that day birded while waiting to get back north. The recent average has been 156 species, so we were down between 15 and 20 species.

Among the individual species, we would note that the Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks that hang around the waterfowl collection at Keith Lake are, according to the owner of the collection, free flying wild birds coming for free food, and so no different from other wild birds coming to feeders. The beach produced two species of scoter, the fifth consecutive year there have been scoters of some species. The numbers of American White Pelicans were quite low.

Only two White-tailed Kites is a low number, but we have to consider that rodent populations presumably took a big hit in the hurricane, and will need a few more months at least to recover. American Kestrels were somewhat down, but they eat many large insects as well as small rodents. Loggerhead Shrikes, however, were significantly down. We did see five Peregrine Falcons, all but one along the beach, presumably feeding on shorebirds and gulls.

We were pleased to see the Whimbrels present again, and good number of Ruddy Turnstones. We found Stilt Sandpipers for the third year in a row. They seem to like ponds very close to the beach, even though those ponds are very frequently at least brackish in the winter. We had two interesting gull species, a second winter Glaucous Gull on Pleasure Island, and two adult California Gulls on the beach.

Tree Swallows were missed within the count circle, although there are flocks around, and, indeed, some were seen count day outside the circle. (Perhaps a participants will

remember seeing a swallow inside the circle!) The numbers of the Passerine species more or less speak for themselves, and the absence of the "inland" sparrow species has already been noted. Pine Siskin was a new species for the count.

The following species were seen (cw indicates seen count week, but not on the day of the count):

WHISTLING-DUCK, Black-bellied (10); GOOSE, Snow (1131); GOOSE, Snow (Blue) (10); GOOSE, Ross's (19); GOOSE, Canada (1); GADWALL (567); WIGEON, American (3); DUCK, Mottled (15); TEAL, Blue-winged (79); SHOVELER, Northern (263); PINTAIL, Northern (46); TEAL, Green-winged (2916); CANVASBACK (3651); REDHEAD (cw); DUCK, Ring-necked (2); SCAUP, Lesser (270); SCAUP, Species (1); SCOTER, Surf (4); SCOTER, Black (2); BUFFLEHEAD (13); MERGANSER, Hooded (5); MERGANSER, Red-breasted (40); DUCK, Ruddy (140); DUCK, species (2350); LOON, Common (cw); GREBE, Pied-billed (35); GREBE, Horned (1); GREBE, Eared (3); PELICAN, American White (306); PELICAN, Brown (136); CORMORANT, Neotropic (315); CORMORANT, Double-crested (135); CORMORANT species (10); ANHINGA (22); BITTERN, American (1); HERON, Great Blue (90); EGRET, Great (545); EGRET, Snowy (93); HERON, Little Blue (26); HERON, Tricolored (63); NIGHT-HERON, Black-crowned (62); NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crowned (3); IBIS, White (550); IBIS, White-faced (26); IBIS, Plegadis species (108); SPOONBILL, Roseate (192); VULTURE, Black (1); VULTURE, Turkey (26); OSPREY (9); KITE, White-tailed (2); HARRIER, Northern (27); HAWK, Sharp-shinned (6); HAWK, Cooper's (cw); HAWK, Red-shouldered (1); HAWK, Red-tailed (14); CARACARA, Crested (cw); KESTREL, American (12); MERLIN (3); FALCON, Peregrine (5); RAIL, Clapper (11); RAIL, King (25); RAIL, Virginia (1); RAIL, species (5); MOORHEN, Common (7); COOT, American (898); PLOVER, Black-bellied (180); PLOVER, Snowy (17); PLOVER, Semipalmated (59); PLOVER, Piping (9); KILLDEER (47); OYSTERCATCHER, American (2); STILT, Black-necked (10); AVOCET, American (305); SANDPIPER, Spotted (3); YELLOWLEGS, Greater (17); WILLET (34); YELLOWLEGS, Lesser (43); WHIMBREL (3); CURLEW, Long-billed (27); TURNSTONE, Ruddy (39); SANDERLING (316); SANDPIPER, Western (120); SANDPIPER, Least (60); DUNLIN (451); SANDPIPER, Stilt (5); DOWITCHER, Short-billed (1); DOWITCHER, Long-billed (16); DOWITCHER, species (151); SNIPE, Wilson's (14); GULL, Laughing (362); GULL, Bonaparte's (36); GULL, Ring-billed (374); GULL, California (2); GULL, Herring (151); GULL, Glaucous (1); TERN, Caspian (9); TERN, Forster's (240); TERN, Royal (104); PIGEON, Rock (49); DOVE, White-winged (3); DOVE, Mourning (13); OWL, Barn (cw); OWL, Great Horned (cw); WILL'S-WIDOW, Chuck; KINGFISHER, Belted (12); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (6); SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied (5); WOODPECKER, Downy (10); FLICKER, Northern (9); PHOEBE, Eastern (31); FLYCATCHER, Ash-throated; SHRIKE, Loggerhead (10); VIREO, Blue-headed (4); JAY, Blue (8); SWALLOW, Tree (cw); CHICKADEE, Carolina (2); CREEPER, Brown (1); WREN, Carolina (3); WREN, House (13); WREN, Sedge (39); WREN, Marsh (5); KINGLET, Ruby-crowned (46); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (22); BLUEBIRD, Eastern (8); THRUSH, Hermit (5); ROBIN, American (7); CATBIRD, Gray (1); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (18); THRASHER, Brown (5); STARLING, European (187); PIPIT, American (30); WAXWING, Cedar (2); WARBLER, Orange-crowned (19); WARBLER, Yellow-rumped (14); WARBLER, Yellow-rumped(Myrtle) (633); WARBLER, Pine (20); WATERTHRUSH, Northern (1); YELLOW-THROAT, Common (3); SPARROW, Lark (cw); SPARROW, Savannah (43); SPARROW, LeConte's (3); SPARROW, Nelson's Sharp-tailed (3); SPARROW, Seaside (7); SPARROW, Lincoln's (2); SPARROW, Swamp (31); SPARROW, White-throated (44); CARDINAL, Northern (17); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (723); MEADOWLARK, Eastern (55); GRACKLE, Common (52);

GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (100); GRACKLE, Great-tailed (180); GRACKLE, species (10); COWBIRD, Brown-headed (1); SISKIN, Pine (4); GOLDFINCH, American (20); SPARROW, House (1); SPECIES, total (139); INDIVIDUALS, total (21061); Observers (18); Parties (8-10); Party-hours total (69.00); Party-miles total (125.25).

Participants: Jim Armacost, Garrett Gauthier, John Haynes, Harrison Jordan, Rose Ann Jordan, Gary Kelley, Andy Loker, Carol Lynn Loker, Steve Mayes, Royce Pendergast, Sherrie Roden, Christine Sliva, Ken Sztraky, Patrick Walther, Colt Westbrook, Tex Wells, Jana Whittle, John Whittle. Thanks also to those who would have participated had we been able to conduct the count on the scheduled day: Don Fisher, Nancy Fisher, Sherry Gibson, Bill Graber, Don Jeane, Patricia Jeane.

## Bird Sightings *(continued from page 5)*

11/3(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/4(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/10(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/11(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/13(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/14(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/15(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/18(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/21(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/23(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/25(2) JAW; JEF 11/27(1) JAW; JEF-BMT 11/29(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/30(1) RHJ

WARBLER, Yellow-rumped (6-28) HAI 5 reps(11); JEF 6 reps(42)

WARBLER, Pine (19-30) HAI 4 reps(5); JEF 3 reps(12)

WARBLER, Palm (27-27) JEF 11/27(1) JAW

SPARROW, Chipping (8-27) HAI-SILS 11/8(6) MG; HAI-SILS 11/11(4) MG; HAI-SILS 11/12(4) MG; HAI-SILS 11/13(4) MG; HAI-SILS 11/16(4) MG; HAI-SILS 11/17(4) MG; HAI-SILS 11/18(4) MG; HAI-SILS 11/19(12) MG; HAI-SILS 11/20(6) MG; HAI-SILS 11/21(10) MG; HAI-SILS 11/22(12) MG; HAI-SILS 11/24(8) MG; HAI-SILS 11/25(8) MG; JEF-BMT 11/25(1) RHJ; JEF 11/27(10) JAW

SPARROW, Savannah (1-27) JEF 11/1(132) JAW; JEF 11/27(158) JAW

SPARROW, Song (27-27) JEF 11/27(1) JAW

SPARROW, Lincoln's (27-27) JEF 11/27(1) JAW

SPARROW, White-throated (5-30) HAI-SILS 11/17(2) MG; JEF-BMT 11/5(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/10(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/11(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/12(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/13(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/14(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/15(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/16(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/17(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/20(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/23(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/25(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/28(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/29(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/30(1) RHJ

SPARROW, White-crowned (1-27) JEF 11/1(1) JAW; JEF 11/27(5) JAW

JUNCO, Dark-eyed (10-10) JEF-BMT 11/10(1) RHJ

CARDINAL, Northern (6-29) HAI 15 reps(132); JEF 1 rep(7)

BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (27-27) JEF 11/27(655) JAW

MEADOWLARK, Eastern (1-27) JEF 11/1(2) JAW; JEF 11/27(11) JAW

MEADOWLARK species (1-27) JEF 11/1(7) JAW; JEF 11/27(11) JAW

GRACKLE, Common (8-8) JEF-NEDR 11/8(20) JAW

GRACKLE, Great-tailed (1-27) JEF 4 reps(71)

COWBIRD, Brown-headed (1-27) JEF 2 reps(450)

BLACKBIRD species (24-27) JEF 2 reps(5010)

FINCH, House (7-30) HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 8 reps(12)

GOLDFINCH, American (18-29) HAI 8 reps(20)

SPARROW, House (8-27) JEF 2 reps(21)

Number of Species 93  
Number of Individuals 19904

### County Abbreviations:

HAI — Hardin; JEF — Jefferson; ORA — Orange

Location Codes: BMT — Beaumont; NEDR — Nederland; ORG — Orange; SILS — Silsbee

Observer Abbreviations; JAW — John Whittle; JFW — Jana Whittle; JJW — John and Jana Whittle; MG — Melanie Goetsell; RHJ — Rose Ann and Harrison Jordan

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The Texas-wide Rare Bird Alert, maintained by Houston Audubon Society, is available on their web-site at <http://www.houstonaudubon.org/> Email alerts are also available for a small fee. Most rare bird sightings in Texas are posted on the TEXBIRDS listserv. The archives of this listserv are at <http://listserv.uh.edu/archives/texbirds.html> It is not necessary to subscribe to the listserv to view the archives, which include postings up to the most recent.

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..>

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