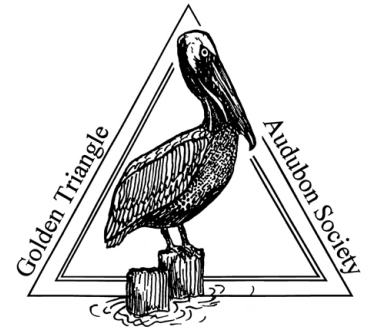


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 15 No. 10

October 2009

**Membership Meeting
Thursday, October 15, 2009
7:00 PM**

Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont

Birds and Power Lines

**Assessing Avian Mortality Rates and Population Impacts
Associated with an Electrical Transmission Line**

Andrea Ayers

As her thesis project in the Biology Master's program at Lamar University, studying under Dr. Jim Armacost, Andrea is studying the impact that a portion of a newly erected transmission line that lies adjacent to the J.D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area has on the avian population in the area. This is planned as a two and a half year study involving year-round data collection three times a week.

Andrea is from Nederland, Texas and attended Lamar University for her bachelor's degree in Biology.

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

Birds as Indicators

One of the most important things we do locally is to monitor local bird populations. Birds as a class are truly indicators of the health of ecosystems. When problems arise, changes in bird populations and distributions are very often the first indication. In this issue, we have a report on one of nature's awe inspiring spectacles that occurs during the annual migration of Broad-winged Hawks when all influences on the birds come into alignment and result in huge concentrations passing over choke points such as Smith Point. Even though this is clearly an exciting spectacle for the birder, counting (or perhaps estimating would be a better word) migrating hawks is an important indicator of the overall populations. Also in this issue, we have a report on the fall Migration Count. Perhaps less spectacular, but also important. As bad luck would have it, two adverse effects were at work over the last year – the habitat changes wrought by Hurricane Ike and those resulting from a prolonged period of very low rainfall. We will probably never be able to separate the effects of the two. But we should be able, over the next few years, to watch bird populations recover, and to observe if any species fail to recover. The big problem in monitoring bird populations, however, is the "natural" fluctuations that mean that trends can only be confirmed after many years. The increasing time span of our records for counts makes them that much more valuable and credible.

The Brown Pelican

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Issue number 156

Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Web Site for more information
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

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Calendar of Events

Thursday October 15. Membership Meeting. Details on page 1.

Saturday October 17. Field Trip to Sabine Woods. 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. Rubber boots will be a good idea, especially if it is at all wet from previous rain or just heavy early morning dew. Bring mosquito repellent just in case. There are few services available in Sabine Pass, and gasoline is not available.

The middle of October is towards the end of fall songbird migration, but often brings a good variety of birds. A cold front may drive down the last of the warblers and the first big push of wintering birds. Some of our winter birds may be arriving, and often the woodland species that winter in the Big Thicket overshoot a little at first.

Although the boardwalk was destroyed in Hurricane Ike, the trails are clear and mostly wide, and although some care is needed to avoid uneven ground, birding Sabine Woods is relatively easy.

Thursday November 19. Membership Meeting. Birds of Ecuador: (Sherrie Roden, Gerald Duhon, Steve Mayes, John Haynes.) Details in next issue.

Saturday November 21. Field Trip to West Jefferson County. Each successive year, the birding in west Jefferson County seems to get better and better. The recent Migration Count found some changes in the bird populations of that area, but mostly what we will be looking for are winter residents who don't know about hurricanes! The area is well known for its raptors, its Sandhill Cranes and its sparrows. In wet years, there can be lots of waterfowl also. An *El Niño* has developed in the eastern Pacific and that portends more rain than usual beginning in mid October.

Sunday January 3, 2010. Sea Rim State Park Christmas Bird Count. Please mark your calendars. Faced with

a calendar that leaves very few suitable weekend days on which to hold Christmas Counts, we decided that Sunday January 3 was the best day to choose. More details in future issues.

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank Sherry Gibson, Frank Giglio, Rose Ann and Harrison Jordan, Sherrie Roden, Paula and Paul Shaw and Jana Whittle for refreshments or contributions for the September meeting. We are currently looking for volunteers for the October meeting. November is traditionally our pot luck dinner meeting, but **we will also need volunteers to bring items for all the 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! Please call Jennifer Armacost at (409) 790-7222 (or email her at 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. The date prefixed by AU is the date your National Audubon Society subscription expires. 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.

Field Trip to Smith Point Hawk Watch – 26 September 2009

Finally, after many years of Hawk Watch field trips, a good number of them with very disappointing numbers, we hit the jackpot. Continuously from about 10:30 a.m. until about 2 p.m., there were kettles of Broad-winged Hawks, some in the monster size category, over the watch site and nearby. Because many of the kettles were apparently not crossing Galveston Bay but retreating back along the north coast of the Smith Point peninsula, it was very difficult to estimate how many hawks we saw, but we think there may have been about 30,000. The official count was more conservative (by deliberate policy), recording just under 20,000 hawks.

The day began quietly enough, as 14 members and guests assembled on the tower at the watch site in Smith Point around 8:30 a.m. There were already a dozen or so Mississippi Kites circling overhead just below the low cloud between the site and the extreme tip of the point. As is often the case in the early part of the morning, Accipiters were among the first hawks to pass cleanly over the site heading west. However, it is not common for Cooper's Hawks to be in the majority early on, but that was the case on this occasion, although the number of Sharp-shinned Hawks eventually surpassed the number of Cooper's Hawks later in the day. In between the watching for hawks, we saw a small flock of a half-dozen Blue Grosbeaks, mostly apparently young birds, and the first Ruby-throated Hummingbirds began partaking from the feeders on the tower. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers could be heard and frequently glimpsed working the small trees on the periphery of the tower site. The first of a number of small lines of White Ibis put in an appearance. The characteristic call of a Downy Woodpecker was frequently heard coming from one of the larger mottes a little further east of the tower. A female Yellow Warbler was seen working the tree tops across from the tower.

Over East Bay south of the watch site, a few lines of Brown Pelicans, mostly immature birds, were seen, and a fishing Osprey was observed at a distance. A second Osprey was seen better later in the day, mixed into a Broad-wing kettle. Often on Hawk Watch field trips, watching Magnificent Frigatebirds over both East Bay and Galveston Bay to the north is a useful diversion from searching the sky for distant hawks. During the day, we did see three Frigatebirds, all at some distance, but there just weren't many spare moments to scan the bays!

By about 10 a.m., the clouds were obviously thinning out and the haze was dispersing. Three Broad-winged Hawks were seen overhead. Then, a little while later, a small kettle of about 100 passed over heading to the point, but turned around and came back. This type of flight pattern was to later plague and frustrate our attempts to accurately estimate the total number of Broad-wings that we saw. Before long we had seen four smallish kettles (50 to 150 birds). Then, as the low clouds cleared and some blue sky became visible, the kettles we saw got larger and larger. First a kettle we estimated at 500, then a larger one with about 3,000 birds. These kettles moved slowly, occasionally streaming across the tower, but often then reassembling at the point and drifting back northeast. As the cloud ceiling got higher, so did the tops of the kettles. We estimated one kettle at 7,500 birds and two others at 5,000 each. One of these kettles contained an all-white hawk that appeared to us to be a Broad-wing, presumably leucistic or even fully albino. (We have to note that this bird was identified by others as a Red-tailed Hawk, but it did not appear to us to be large enough to be anything other than a Broad-winged Hawk.) Between about 1:00 and 1:30 p.m., there was a monster kettle, or perhaps it was several conjoined kettles, that we estimated may have totaled 10,000 birds. In an arc from north-northeast through east, there were unbroken dense concentrations of Broad-wings, with several towering columns of birds within the arc. Shortly after 2 p.m., the birds thinned out and disappeared, as they often seem to do at Smith Point at that hour. Most of our group left

before 3 p.m. but apparently, there was one more large kettle a little later in the day.

Smith Point is exciting for other species that can be seen migrating in significant flocks. We had not seen very many kettles of hawks before a "kettle" of about 150 Anhingas, the first of several, joined the fray. There were four or five other flocks of Anhingas during the morning and the Anhinga total for the day probably reached about 1,000. One line of about 30 white birds approaching from the northeast was almost dismissed a another group of Ibis, but the black on the primary and secondary wing feathers soon made it clear that these were in fact Wood Storks. From that point on, there were always Woods Storks around, typically in or underneath the lower parts of the Broad-wing kettles, and the final estimate was over 300.

Although the Broad-wings were the star attraction, there were other species of raptor around. A couple of young Red-tailed Hawks were found in the kettles, as well as two others later, and at least two Swainson's Hawks were identified. There was considerable excitement when there was a call of "eagle," and a nice adult Bald Eagle came out of the lower stratum of one of the kettles and was clearly seen by all on the tower. Two Red-shouldered Hawks may have been "local" birds, as likely were many of both the Turkey and Black Vultures. One distant White-tailed Kite, but only one or two Northern Harriers were seen. For late September, falcons were also strangely few in number. There were only about a half-dozen American Kestrels. This species seems to be migrating later than normal this year. We recorded only one Peregrine, and that was a very distant bird.

The author has some hawk counting experience from the days in the mid-nineties when the Smith Point watch was a purely volunteer effort, and also of having been at Hazel Bazemore in Corpus Christi on a day when the official count was over 300,000. The challenge to the official counters at Smith Point on this day was unenviable, much more difficult than any the author has seen. At Hazel, the birds were mostly cleanly streaming in one direction, even if in one kettle after another all day. At Smith Point, the kettles were large and not moving very fast, often reversing course back from the Point itself, and determining which were "new" kettles and which contained birds that had already been estimated was very, very difficult.

Everyone agreed that this was one of the most exciting field trip we have ever conducted. We do try to schedule the hawk watch trip as near as we can to the average peak of Broad-winged Hawk migration in Texas of 25/26 September. But weather, both at and near Smith Point and between the breeding grounds and Texas can make a difference. This year, it looks as if the very wet weather in Georgia and neighboring states bottled the hawks up until a cold front passed through a couple of days prior to our trip and the hawks took advantage of the clearing weather and north winds behind the front. The Hawk Migration Association of North America's list serve allows one to watch hawk numbers as they pass through as far south as the mid-Atlantic states and states inland at those latitudes, but after that, there are no watch sites until they hit Smith Point.

Birds recorded from the tower: American White Pelican (21); Brown Pelican (38); Anhinga (1000); Magnificent Frigatebird (3); White Ibis (74); Roseate Spoonbill (3); Wood Stork (312); Black Vulture (3); Turkey Vulture (9); Osprey (2); White-tailed Kite (1); Mississippi Kite (81); Bald Eagle (1); Northern Harrier (1); Sharp-shinned Hawk (50); Cooper's Hawk (35); Red-shouldered Hawk (2); Broad-winged Hawk (31,675); Swainson's Hawk (2); Red-tailed Hawk (4); American Kestrel (6); Peregrine Falcon (1); Laughing Gull (5); Caspian Tern (2); Ruby-throated Hummingbird (2); Downy Woodpecker (1); Eastern Kingbird (3); Blue Jay (3); Purple Martin (1); Tree Swallow (10); Cliff Swallow (10); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (8); Yellow Warbler (1); Blue Grosbeak (6).
John A. Whittle

The Fall Migration Count – 19 September 2009

Dry Conditions – Lingering Effects of Hurricanes – Changed Habitats

The fall migration count has had a checkered history in recent years. The last "normal" situation was in 2005, when the count was conducted eight days *before* Hurricane Rita struck. The area was beginning to recover in 2006, but then in 2007, the count was scheduled for (and conducted on) what turned out to be two days after minimal hurricane Humberto passed over. In 2008, Hurricane Ike struck exactly a week before count day, and the area was still under mandatory evacuation on count day. So, we were unable to conduct a count in 2008.

What were we faced with this year? Well, the weather on count day was good. Hurricane Ike was more of a storm surge event than anything else. That storm surge inflicted great damage on the immediate coast and one of our favored birding spots – the Willows at Sea Rim – is no more. The marshes on the immediate coast are affected by salt water wash-over quite regularly (but will be more so now for a while until the dune system builds or is built back up), and they do not appear to be much different. Just inland of that – most of the marshes north of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway – are normally fresh water marshes and both they and the pastureland and rice fields that went under salt water in Ike are far from normal. To make matters worse, the year that has followed Ike has been one of the driest in recent memory, so a lot of the salt has still not been flushed away. We hope the *El Niño* that has developed will be strong enough to bring us a wet late fall and winter.

The birds along the coast were reasonably normal – perhaps on the low side of normal as far as species diversity is concerned – but 15 warbler species were seen on the day. The migrants "traps," badly affected by Ike, nevertheless held reasonable numbers of migrants.

We also had special permission to access the Sea Rim State Park beach. The beach is probably still not back to normal as far as the birds are concerned, and tern and gull numbers were low, as were the numbers of small plovers and other true beach birds. Finding a Lesser Black-backed Gull made up for missing Herring Gull.

In addition to the natural habitat issues, Cattail Marsh in Tyrrell Park in Beaumont is currently undergoing an extensive and lengthy rehabilitation, and although we were able to access it for the count, there was almost no water, and therefore very few ducks and almost no shorebirds. Coupled with the very dry conditions in west Jefferson County, this made for very low numbers of shorebirds, and we did not find several species we normally expect to find on this count.

The western part of the county was another story or rather two stories. South of Highway 73, almost all the land is still very much affected by salt. How much of the lack of birds was caused by the salt and how much by the very dry conditions, we will probably never know. The storm surge likely almost eliminated the rodent population and it will likely be some time before the area is re-colonized. Almost no birds are to be found in these areas south of Highway 73. North of the Highway, the dry conditions are very apparent. One does not expect to spend all day in the field and not see a single grackle, but it happened. Paradoxically, the overall grackle

totals were not dramatically lower. The grackles had left the country areas and moved to the cities, likely because water is more readily available there. There has been a very significant drop in Red-winged Blackbird numbers. However, very low numbers were counted in 2005 immediately before Rita. The numbers have remained low ever since. What part the hurricanes have played in this is not clear, and some may be a result of changing patterns of rice farming. Eastern Meadowlark has been a species of concern for some time now as populations are on the decline. While we have on two previous occasions found only one, this year, none of the observers found any. Each year, we seem to have great difficulty finding them on this count yet a few weeks before, they have always been present in numbers. Two possible explanations come to mind. Perhaps the Meadowlarks that winter in our area are not the same bird as bred here, and our summer birds move south before our winter birds arrive. Alternatively, perhaps the birds are more secretive in September as they undergo their annual molt.

One notable aspect of hurricane recovery is that the herons and ibis seem to re-occupy areas before any other birds. Herons such as Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets and Tricolored Herons seem just as happy in salt water as they are in fresh, and this might explain their quick return. We observed small fish in many obviously still salty ponds very soon after the storms – perhaps even brought in by the storm surge. There does not seem to have been any effect on ibis populations, and, if anything, Cattle Egret numbers are still increasing.

We did not see many hawks. We wonder if the rodent population had something to do with this, or whether it was a consequence of some situation in their breeding areas. Many raptor species head south when their food supply runs low, so in good years, southward migration of many raptor species can be delayed. (It may actually be more accurate to state that raptors head south sooner and further in years when their prey populations crash.) It has been a cold, wet summer in the Northeast. Has that made prey more plentiful there?

We did add two "new" species to this count: the Lesser Black-backed Gull on the beach and a Vesper Sparrow seen and photographed on Ferry Road in extreme east Port Arthur near the Veteran's Memorial Bridge. This Vesper Sparrow was at least three weeks early.

Obviously, 144 species is a low count. We were one or two species low in most groups. The total number of individuals was also low, but high than some past "normal" years.

With a low total, it is perhaps inevitable that we had a number of reports of "count week" birds. Our observers were frustrated by not being able to find Great Horned and Screech Owls on the day of the count that they found the previous day and/or the next day. Although we have found early Ruby-crowned Kinglets on this count three times before, a count week bird was nevertheless still very early. The day after the count, a Groove-billed Ani was seen in Sabine Woods. This may have been the same bird as the one that was seen on the

Sabine Woods work day (September 12) in the remains of the mulberry trees long Highway 87 opposite where the McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge headquarters building stood before Ike.

The following is a list of birds seen on the day. We have the results of all previous all counts – we started this count in 1996 – on a single spreadsheet which is available on request in Excel format (or anything that we can easily convert an Excel spreadsheet into). This contains the breakdowns by area so is quite a large (approximately 500K) file, and is available upon request.

Birds seen on the count:

WHISTLING-DUCK, Black-bellied (209); WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous (72); DUCK, Wood (2); DUCK, Mottled (8); TEAL, Blue-winged (111); SHOVELER, Northern (16); TEAL, Green-winged (1); GREBE, Pied-billed (23); PELICAN, Brown (298); CORMORANT, Neotropic (156); ANHINGA (8); HERON, Great Blue (23); EGRET, Great (170); EGRET, Snowy (188); HERON, Little Blue (31); HERON, Tricolored (70); EGRET, Reddish (4); EGRET, Cattle (1636); HERON, Green (19); NIGHT-HERON, Black-crowned (6); NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crowned (3); IBIS, White (409); IBIS, White-faced (12); IBIS, Plegadis (48); SPOONBILL, Roseate (152); STORK, Wood (302); VULTURE, Black (129); VULTURE, Turkey (36); KITE, White-tailed (2); HAWK, Sharp-shinned (1); HAWK, Cooper's (1); HAWK, Red-shouldered (15); HAWK, Broad-winged (6); HAWK, Swainson's (3); HAWK, White-tailed (1); HAWK, Red-tailed (1); CARACARA, Crested (1); KESTREL, American (3); MERLIN (1); FALCON, Peregrine (1); RAIL, Clapper (20); RAIL, King (1); MOORHEN, Common (21); COOT, American (2); PLOVER, Black-bellied (13); PLOVER, Semipalmated (1); PLOVER, Piping (2); KILLDEER (108); STILT, Black-necked (90); YELLOW-LEGS, Greater (6); YELLOWLEGS, Lesser (7); WILLET (32); SANDPIPER, Spotted (8); CURLEW, Long-billed (4); GODWIT, Marbled (3); TURNSTONE, Ruddy (2); SANDERLING (81); SANDPIPER, Western (6); SANDPIPER, Least (21); SANDPIPER, Baird's (1); SANDPIPER, Peep species (15); DOWITCHER, Short-billed (43); DOWITCHER, Species (1); GULL, Laughing (976); GULL, Ring-billed (6); GULL, Lesser Black-backed (1); TERN, Caspian (127); TERN, Royal (135); TERN, Forster's (79); TERN, Black (105); SKIMMER, Black (115); PIGEON, Rock (345); COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian (165); DOVE, White-winged (120); DOVE, Mourning (398); DOVE, Inca (2); ANI, Groove-billed (cw); OWL, Barn (1); SCREECH-OWL, Eastern (cw); OWL, Great Horned (cw); SWIFT, Chimney (47); HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-throated (393); KINGFISHER, Belted (5); WOODPECKER, Red-headed (2); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (43); WOODPECKER, Downy (21); WOODPECKER, Pileated (7); WOOD-PEWEE, Eastern (8); FLYCATCHER, Yellow-bellied (2); FLYCATCHER, Traill's (1); FLYCATCHER, Least (4); FLYCATCHER, Empidonax (8); FLYCATCHER, Great Crested (11); KINGBIRD, Western (1); KINGBIRD, Eastern (33); FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tailed (20); SHRIKE, Loggerhead (57); VIREO, White-eyed (30); VIREO, Yellow-throated (2); VIREO, Warbling (3); JAY, Blue (133); CROW, American (22); CROW, Fish (1); CROW, Species (8); MARTIN, Purple (1); SWALLOW, Tree (67); SWALLOW, N. Rough-winged (20); SWALLOW, Bank

(1); SWALLOW, Cave (25); SWALLOW, Barn (428); CHICKADEE, Carolina (49); TITMOUSE, Tufted (8); WREN, Carolina (34); WREN, Marsh (1); KINGLET, Ruby-crowned (cw); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (106); BLUEBIRD, Eastern (41); ROBIN, American (10); CATBIRD, Gray (1); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (183); THRASHER, Brown (3); STARLING, European (634); WARBLER, Tennessee (1); PARULA, Northern (1); WARBLER, Yellow (16); WARBLER, Chestnut-sided (1); WARBLER, Yellow-throated (1); WARBLER, Pine (10); WARBLER, Black-and-white (1); REDSTART, American (2); WATERTHRUSH, Northern (1); WARBLER, Mourning (1); YELLOWTHROAT, Common (6); WARBLER, Hooded (2); WARBLER, Wilson's (2); WARBLER, Canada (1); CHAT, Yellow-breasted (6); TANAGER, Summer (3); SPARROW, Vesper (1); SPARROW, Seaside (14); CARDINAL, Northern (109); GROSBEAK, Blue (19); BUNTING, Indigo (2); BUNTING, Painted (3); DICKCISSEL (6); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (459); GRACKLE, Common (82); GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (139); GRACKLE, Great-tailed (563); COWBIRD, Brown-headed (47); ORIOLE, Baltimore (36); FINCH, House (4); SPARROW, House (192); TOTAL (11,446). "cw" indicates seen "count week" (the three days before and the three days after the actual count day).

Number of species (144); Number of Observers (14); Number of Parties (10); Number of Party-Hours (49.69); Party hours on foot (13.25); Miles on foot (12.2); Party-hours by automobile (33.43); Miles by automobile (521.98); Party-hours by bicycle (3.00); Miles by bicycle (4.00); Party-hours feeder watching (0.50); Participants 2009 (); Althea Bythewood; Bob Collier; Howard Davis; Frank Giglio; John Haynes; Harrison Jordan; Rose Ann Jordan; Steve Mayes; Sherrie Roden; Dottie Schulz; Gene Schulz; Ken Sztraky; Jana Whittle; John Whittle.

John A. Whittle

Big Thicket National Preserve Headquarters Dedication, Oct. 10

The Big Thicket National Preserve and the Big Thicket Association invite you to this year's annual Big Thicket Day celebration! This year's celebration will be held on October 10 in conjunction with the dedication of the Preserve's new headquarters building and will be held at the Preserve's headquarters complex, on Highway 69 about seven miles north of Kountze, Texas. This event will also celebrate the 35th anniversary of the creation of the Big Thicket National Preserve. The ceremony is scheduled to start at 10:00 a.m. RSVPs are requested if possible (if you receive this in time) at director@bigthicket.org or 936-274-1181.

US Forest Service Public Meeting to Discuss Management Indicators, Oct. 28

The US Forest service is holding a public meeting to discuss proposed changes in the Management Indicators that are used to guide and evaluate the success of its management plans in the area. The all day meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. at the Ellen Trout Zoo, on North Loop 287 in Lufkin, Texas. For more information, contact lynnjackson@fs.fed.us or call 936-639-8581.

Bird Sightings – August 2009

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 johnawhittle@aol.com or call (409) 880-8276. For "very rare" birds, or very much out-of-season species, 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: There is rarely anything much to say about August. Very few birders brave the heat and mosquitoes. For most species, fall migration barely gets under way. Shorebirds are the exception and there was quite a good showing of them late in the month.

WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous 8/29(1) JAW	(9-29)	JEF 8/9(1) JAW; JEF
CORMORANT, Neotropic	(9-9)	JEF-TP 8/9(5) JAW
ANHINGA 8/23(1) WWF	(9-23)	JEF 8/9(1) JAW; JEF
HERON, Great Blue	(29-29)	JEF 8/29(1) JAW
EGRET, Great	(9-29)	JEF 4 reps(67)
EGRET, Snowy 8/29(7) JAW	(9-29)	JEF-TP 8/9(20) JAW; JEF
HERON, Little Blue 8/9(75) JAW; JEF 8/29(2) JAW	(9-29)	JEF 8/9(5) JAW; JEF-TP
HERON, Tricolored	(9-9)	JEF 8/9(1) JAW
EGRET, Cattle TP 8/9(110) JAW; JEF-BMT 8/12(30) JAW; JEF 8/22(164) JAW; JEF 8/23(159) WWF; JEF 8/29(1080) JAW	(9-29)	JEF 8/9(1168) JAW; JEF-
EGRET, Cattle	(9-29)	JEF 5 reps(2711)
HERON, Green 8/9(1) JAW; JEF 8/23(1) WWF; JEF 8/29(2) JAW	(9-29)	HA-VCSP 8/27(1) JA; JEF
NIGHT-HERON, Black-crowned	(23-23)	JEF 8/23(1) WWF
NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crown.	(9-9)	JEF 8/9(1) JAW
IBIS, White 8/9(50) JAW; JEF 8/29(20) JAW	(9-29)	JEF 8/9(1) JAW; JEF-TP
IBIS, White-faced	(9-9)	JEF 8/9(3) JAW
IBIS, Plegadis 8/9(100) JAW; JEF 8/12(2) JAW	(9-12)	JEF 8/9(9) JAW; JEF-TP
STORK, Wood 8/6(3) CSL; JEF 8/8(300) JHH; JEF 8/12(250) JAW; JEF 8/12(300) JHH; JEF 8/15(300) HM; JEF 8/23(13) WWF	(6-23)	HA-VCSP 8/10(1) JA; JEF
VULTURE, Turkey	(9-29)	JEF 4 reps(23)
KITE, Mississippi	(23-23)	JEF 8/23(1) WWF
HAWK, Red-shouldered HA-VCSP 8/22(1) JA	(10-22)	HA-VCSP 8/10(1) JA;
HAWK, Swainson's 8/23(1) WWF	(10-23)	JEF 8/10(1) JAW; JEF
HAWK, Red-tailed	(9-9)	JEF 8/9(1) JAW
FALCON, Peregrine	(8-8)	JEF 8/8(1) RP
GALLINULE, Purple	(9-9)	JEF-TP 8/9(1) JAW
KILLDEER	(9-29)	JEF 3 reps(83)
STILT, Black-necked JEF 8/23(3) WWF; JEF 8/29(35) JAW	(9-29)	JEF-TP 8/9(505) JAW;
SANDPIPER, Spotted 8/29(1) JAW	(9-29)	JEF-TP 8/9(1) JAW; JEF
SANDPIPER, Solitary 8/29(5) JAW	(9-29)	JEF-TP 8/9(1) JAW; JEF
YELLOWLEGS, Greater 8/29(6) JAW	(9-29)	JEF 8/9(1) JAW; JEF
YELLOWLEGS, Lesser 8/29(53) JAW	(9-29)	JEF-TP 8/9(50) JAW; JEF
SANDPIPER, Upland	(29-29)	JEF 8/29(2) JAW
SANDPIPER, Semipalmated	(29-29)	JEF 8/29(3) JAW
SANDPIPER, Western 8/29(1) JAW	(12-29)	JEF 8/12(5) JAW; JEF
SANDPIPER, Least 8/29(7) JAW	(12-29)	JEF 8/12(2) JAW; JEF
SANDPIPER, Baird's	(12-29)	JEF 2 reps(3)
SANDPIPER, Pectoral 8/12(1) JAW; JEF 8/29(51) JAW	(9-29)	JEF-TP 8/9(2) JAW; JEF
SANDPIPER, Stilt	(29-29)	JEF 8/29(15) JAW
SANDPIPER, Buff-breasted	(29-29)	JEF 8/29(5) JAW
DOWITCHER, Long-billed	(29-29)	JEF 8/29(4) JAW
GULL, Laughing 8/9(150) JAW; JEF 8/29(6) JAW	(9-29)	JEF 8/9(6) JAW; JEF-TP
TERN, Black	(9-9)	JEF-TP 8/9(100) JAW
TERN, Forster's 8/9(1) JAW; JEF 8/23(1) WWF; JEF 8/29(1) JAW	(9-29)	JEF 8/9(2) JAW; JEF-TP
PIGEON, Rock reps(35)	(2-29)	HAI 3 reps(21); JEF 3
COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian reps(16)	(2-29)	HAI 3 reps(6); JEF 4
DOVE, White-winged	(7-10)	JEF 4 reps(16)
DOVE, Mourning reps(160)	(4-29)	HAI 6 reps(22); JEF 5
DOVE, Inca	(26-26)	HA-SILS 8/26(2) MG
CUCKOO, Yellow-billed	(22-22)	JEF-SW 8/22(1) JAR
OWL, Barn	(22-22)	JEF-SW 8/22(2) JAR
WILL'S-WIDOW, Chuck-	(22-22)	JEF-SW 8/22(1) JAR
SWIFT, Chimney JEF-SW 8/22(8) JAR	(10-22)	HA-VCSP 8/10(1) JA;
HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-throat.	(2-29)	HA-SILS 8/2(3) MG; HA-SILS 8/5(3) MG; HA-SILS 8/10(3) MG; HA-SILS 8/13(3) MG; HA-SILS 8/25(3) MG; HA-SILS 8/26(3) MG; JEF-NEDR 8/6(3) JAW; JEF-NEDR 8/8(2) JAW; JEF-NEDR 8/22(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 8/24(4) JAW; JEF-NEDR 8/29(2) JAW
WOODPECKER, Red-headed HA-VCSP 8/27(2) JA	(22-27)	HA-VCSP 8/22(4) JA;
WOODPECKER, Red-bellied rep(1)	(2-27)	HAI 7 reps(30); JEF 1
WOODPECKER, Downy reps(3)	(4-27)	HAI 4 reps(7); JEF 2
WOODPECKER, Pileated JA	(4-27)	HA-VCSP 8/4(1) JA; HA-VCSP 8/10(1) JA; HA-VCSP 8/22(3) JA; HA-VCSP 8/27(3) JA
WOOD-PEWEE, Eastern	(22-22)	JEF-SW 8/22(2) JAR
FLYCATCHER, Traill's	(22-22)	JEF-SW 8/22(2) JAR
FLYCATCHER, Gt. Crested	(27-27)	HA-VCSP 8/27(1) JA
KINGBIRD, Eastern 8/22(1) JAW; JEF-SW 8/22(7) JAR; JEF-TX87 8/22(25) JAR; JEF 8/29(1) JAW	(9-29)	JEF 8/9(10) JAW; JEF
FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tailed 8/22(2) JAW; JEF 8/29(4) JAW	(9-29)	JEF 8/9(5) JAW; JEF
SHRIKE, Loggerhead 8/22(1) JAW; JEF 8/29(2) JAW	(9-29)	JEF 8/9(6) JAW; JEF
VIREO, White-eyed JA; HA-VCSP 8/27(6) JA	(2-27)	HA-SILS 8/2(1) MG; HA-VCSP 8/4(6) JA; HA-VCSP 8/10(9) JA; HA-VCSP 8/22(7) JA; HA-VCSP 8/27(6) JA
VIREO, Yellow-throat HA-VCSP 8/22(1) JA; HA-VCSP 8/27(2) JA	(10-27)	HA-VCSP 8/10(1) JA;
VIREO, Red-eyed VCSP 8/10(3) JA; HA-VCSP 8/22(2) JA	(4-22)	HA-VCSP 8/4(2) JA; HA-
JAY, Blue reps(6)	(2-27)	HAI 11 reps(64); JEF 2
CROW, American HA-VCSP 8/27(1) JA	(22-27)	HA-VCSP 8/22(1) JA;
CROW, species	(12-24)	JEF 3 reps(5)
MARTIN, Purple	(9-9)	JEF 8/9(8) JAW
SWALLOW, Tree	(9-9)	JEF 8/9(1) JAW
SWALLOW, Cliff	(22-22)	JEF-SW 8/22(7) JAR

SWALLOW, Cave	(9-9)	JEF 8/9(11) JAW
SWALLOW, Barn	(9-29)	JEF 8/9(33) JAW; JEF-SW 8/22(9) JAR; JEF 8/29(10) JAW
CHICKADEE, Carolina	(3-27)	HAI 8 reps(31); JEF 2 reps(3)
TITMOUSE, Tufted	(3-27)	HAI 8 reps(19)
NUTHATCH, Brown-headed	(22-22)	HAI-VCSP 8/22(2) JA
WREN, Carolina	(4-27)	HAI-VCSP 8/4(6) JA; HAI-VCSP 8/10(6) JA; HAI-VCSP 8/22(8) JA; HAI-VCSP 8/27(10) JA
GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray	(5-22)	HAI-SILS 8/5(1) MG; HAI-SILS 8/7(1) MG; HAI-SILS 8/13(1) MG; HAI-SILS 8/17(1) MG; HAI-SILS 8/19(2) MG; HAI-VCSP 8/22(3) JA; JEF-SW 8/22(6) JAR
ROBIN, American	(25-25)	JEF-NEDR 8/25(1) JAW
CATBIRD, Gray	(9-27)	HAI-SILS 8/9(1) MG; HAI-VCSP 8/10(1) JA; HAI-SILS 8/13(1) MG; HAI-SILS 8/14(1) MG; HAI-VCSP 8/27(1) JA; JEF-SW 8/22(2) JAR
MOCKINGBIRD, Northern	(4-29)	HAI 2 reps(4); JEF 6 reps(51)
THRASHER, Brown	(10-25)	HAI-SILS 8/10(1) MG; HAI-SILS 8/17(1) MG; HAI-SILS 8/19(1) MG; HAI-SILS 8/25(3) MG; JEF-SW 8/22(1) JAR
STARLING, European	(9-29)	JEF 3 reps(303)
WARBLER, Yellow	(22-22)	JEF-SRSP 8/22(5) JAR
WARBLER, Pine	(10-27)	HAI-VCSP 8/10(1) JA; HAI-VCSP 8/22(2) JA; HAI-VCSP 8/27(3) JA
WARBLER, Black-and-white	(22-22)	JEF-SW 8/22(1) JAR
WARBLER, Hooded	(4-27)	HAI-VCSP 8/4(1) JA; HAI-VCSP 8/10(2) JA; HAI-SILS 8/13(1) MG; HAI-VCSP 8/27(2) JA; JEF-SW 8/22(3) JAR
WARBLER, Canada	(22-22)	JEF-SW 8/22(1) JAR
CHAT, Yellow-breasted	(10-27)	HAI-VCSP 8/10(2) JA; HAI-VCSP 8/22(1) JA; HAI-SILS 8/25(1) MG; HAI-VCSP 8/27(1) JA; JEF-SW 8/22(2) JAR
TANAGER, Summer	(10-22)	HAI-VCSP 8/10(1) JA; HAI-VCSP 8/22(1) JA
CARDINAL, Northern	(2-27)	HAI 10 reps(275); JEF 2 reps(7)
BUNTING, Indigo	(4-10)	HAI-VCSP 8/4(1) JA; HAI-VCSP 8/10(1) JA; JEF 8/9(10) JAW
DICKCISSEL	(9-9)	JEF 8/9(1) JAW
BLACKBIRD, Red-winged	(9-29)	JEF 8/9(23) JAW; JEF-TP 8/9(10) JAW; JEF 8/22(4) JAW; JEF 8/29(1) JAW
MEADOWLARK, Eastern	(9-9)	JEF 8/9(2) JAW
MEADOWLARK species	(9-29)	JEF 8/9(7) JAW; JEF 8/29(1) JAW
GRACKLE, Common	(22-22)	JEF-SW 8/22(15) JAR
GRACKLE, Great-tailed	(9-29)	JEF 4 reps(159)
GRACKLE, Gt./Boat-tailed	(22-22)	JEF 1 rep(2)
COWBIRD, Brown-headed	(10-29)	HAI-VCSP 8/10(2) JA; JEF 8/29(40) JAW
ORIOLE, Orchard	(9-22)	HAI-SILS 8/13(1) MG; JEF 8/9(2) JAW; JEF-SW 8/22(5) JAR
FINCH, House	(2-19)	HAI-SILS 8/2(1) MG; HAI-SILS 8/3(3) MG; HAI-SILS 8/14(1) MG; HAI-SILS 8/19(1) MG
SPARROW, House	(7-9)	JEF 2 reps(14)
Number of Species		102
Number of Individuals		14268

County Abbreviations:

HAI — Hardin; JEF — Jefferson

Location Codes:

BMT — Beaumont; NEDR — Nederland; 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; VCSP — Village Creek State Park

Observer Abbreviations

CSL — Christine Sliva; HM — John Haynes and Steve Mayes; JA — Jim Armacost; JAR — John Arvin; JAW — John Whittle; JHH — John H. Haynes; MG — Melanie Goetsell; RP — Royce Pendergast; WWF — Jana and John Whittle, Ross Foreman.

Sabine Woods Report

A Work Day was held at Sabine Woods on Saturday September 17th with 14 volunteers. Despite rain, quite heavy for a period in the middle of the morning, we got a lot accomplished. Howard Davis had bushhogged for us about three weeks prior, so the focus was on working on the open areas and trails to cut the new growth and to get the grass and vegetation shorter. Almost all of the "traditional" trails inside the woods were re-found and re-opened. The little pond at the drip was overgrown and the vegetation there was cut down. Repairs to the water supply at the drip are almost complete – the absence of a hardware store anywhere closer to the Woods than 30 miles prevented completion – but this will occur shortly. (This year, enormous quantities of very tall (up to 15 feet) growth of giant ragweed has occurred, and we worked on cutting it down in some areas to prevent it seeding for next year in areas where the woods have normally had a more open understory. (There is plenty left, especially in the western parts of the Woods.) It appears that giant ragweed is more tolerant of salt water than other understory species, and also that seeds were spread far and wide by the storm surge. It does require sunlight for growth, so it will hopefully be present in diminished quantities as the canopy recovers.

The main pond now has some water in it, and a sample taken on the work day showed a salinity of 2.8 ppt, which means we probably do not need to be concerned any longer. More water will further dilute any salt, and on the Sunday, the pond probably held twice as much water as it did Saturday. The recent very beneficial rains should also help flush any remaining salt away from the rest of the Sanctuary.

We thank most sincerely all those who came and worked in the rain, and brought the equipment which so facilitated the work. Andy Allen, Howard Davis, John Haynes, Harrison Jordan, Gary Kelley, Brad Lirette, Steve Mayes, Wendy Mires, Sally and Chuck Moffet, Richard Orgeron, Christine Sliva, and Jana Whittle.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Announces Proposed Construction of Office Facilities on Texas Point National Wildlife Refuge

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and McFaddin and Texas Point National Wildlife Refuges are proposing to construct office facilities on Texas Point NWR near Lat/Long 29°42'32.36"N / 95°55'10.66"W in Sabine Pass, Texas. This facility will be constructed to replace previous office facilities destroyed during Hurricane Ike. The facility will be approximately 3,600 square feet, and consist of seven individual offices. The facility will be constructed on concrete pilings with the floor elevation at 20.33 feet above sea level. A 20-foot wide concrete driveway will provide access to a parking area with 20 dedicated parking spaces for both the public and staff. Access to the parking area will be controlled by a gate. Also, a perimeter fence will be installed around the staff parking area to provide additional security for vehicles. City water will be run to the facility and an aerobic septic system will be installed on site. The Service is seeking public review and comments on the proposal. The comment period will end October 9, 2009.

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RARE BIRD ALERTS

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/> Email alerts are also available for a small fee. Most rare bird sightings in Texas are posted on the TEXBIRDS listserv. Archives of the listserv are at <http://lists.texbirds.org/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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