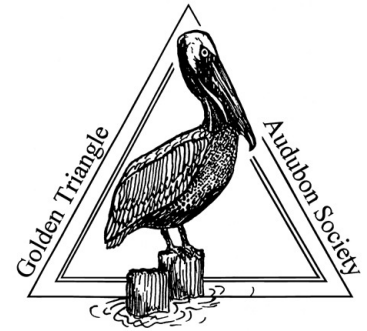


# *The Brown Pelican*



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

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Vol. 22 No. 3

March 2016

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**Membership Meeting  
Thursday March 17, 2016 7:00 p.m.  
Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont**

**The Lagow Ranch  
R. H. "Chip" Lewis III**

The program will be a narrated pictorial presentation showing different birds and wildlife on the ranch as well as different management practices we have learned and changes we have made to enhance the wildlife numbers and provide for future growth and expansion.

Mr. Lewis was born in Fort Myers Florida and grew up outside a little town on the south east shore of Lake Okeechobee called Belle Glade. He lived on the University of Florida Everglades Experimental Station until he was nineteen when he got married and moved to town. While growing up and after, he hunted and fished the Everglades, Big Cypress Swamp and a multitude of other places around Florida enjoying the outdoors and wilderness areas.

He moved to Texas over twenty years ago, eventually ending up on the Lagow Ranch, in Chambers County off of FM1985, where he has been assisting in the implementation of ranch improvements such as drainage, wildlife habitat, and pasture and road improvements. This philosophy started with the twins Janet and Jean Lagow's late father, Joe Lagow, who was a conservationist like his own father putting up Wood Duck nests and other wildlife enhancement practices. The twins decided to share the ranch and open it to the public for bird watching in 2012, but it has taken until now to make this possible. This ranch is a fifth generation cattle ranch that is still currently in operation and is also part of the original Steven F. Austin Spanish land grant.

We will plan on having the doors open by 6:00 p.m. and the program will start at 7:00 p.m. sharp. A light supper will be available from 6:15 p.m.

## *The Brown Pelican*

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Issue number 226

### Golden Triangle Audubon Society

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

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## Calendar of Events

*Important Note: Field Trip notices published here should always be regarded as needing confirmation just before the date. Changes will always be posted on the web site at [www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org). Confirmation of the location will also normally be available at the Membership Meeting that is usually, but not always, two days prior to each trip, or by contacting Field Trip Committee chair, Steve Mayes at 409-722-5807 or [sgmayes@hotmail.com](mailto:sgmayes@hotmail.com).*

**Saturday March 5, 2016. Sabine Woods Work Day.** We plan to get the Sabine Woods Sanctuary ready for spring migration. Mostly, it will be trail maintenance both inside and outside the woods. We will certainly be able to put riding mowers (the heavier duty the better) to good use, and we will probably need push mowers to trim round the trees we have planted in the last couple of years, and parts of the trails where riding mowers are too big. As always, we will need loppers to trim small branches to keep the trails open. We have a few hand tools, but it will help if you bring any that you have. You will probably want to bring insect repellent, and you may want to bring sunscreen.

Sabine Woods is 4.1 miles west of Sabine Pass on the north side of Highway 87. We will be there from about 7:30 a.m. but you will be welcome if you arrive somewhat later. We normally work until noon or a little after, and we will provide drinks and lunch. We plan another Work Day for mid-May. Call 722-4193 with any questions.

**Thursday March 17, 2016. Membership Meeting.** Speaker: Chip Lewis on the Lagow Ranch in Chambers County. See page 1 for full details.

**Saturday March 19, 2016. Field Trip to Bolivar Flats.**

*Important Note: Galveston County operates a parking permit program on the Bolivar Peninsula. If you park on most parts of the beach, including the part next to the Flats, you must have a parking permit on your windshield. The fee for the permit is \$10.00 a year and*

*permits are obtainable from most merchants on the Bolivar Peninsula including the Big Store, which opens at 7:00 a.m..*

This trip will occur as spring shorebird migration is getting well under way, but while the wintering birds are mostly still present. Bolivar Flats is an internationally important shore-bird location. We know that a lot of birders are intimidated by shorebirds, but they are not nearly as difficult to identify as is sometimes alleged! This trip offers an opportunity to compare many of the "true" shorebirds with lots of help in identifying them.

Meet at the vehicle barrier at 8:30 a.m. From Winnie, take TX 124 south to High Island. At the shoreline, turn right (west) on TX 87 and proceed through Gilchrist and Crystal Beach until you reach the intersection where Loop 108 turns right (north). Turn left (the opposite way to Loop 108) along Rettillon Road. At the beach, if conditions permit, turn right (west) about 1/2 mile to the vehicle barrier. It takes at least one and a half hours to drive from the Golden Triangle. We will leave the vehicle barrier at about 8:45 a.m., although the group will be visually obvious on the flats should you be a few minutes later than that.

Some walking is necessary on this field trip. Depending on the mud flat conditions, we may visit to the North Jetty to view the birds from that side.

We normally stop at Fort Travis Park to eat lunch and use the facilities. We may stop at Rollover Pass and usually stop at High Island on the way back. We will check in High Island for any "very early" Neotropical songbird migrants. Bring drinks and lunch (or buy locally, but that is not particularly easy), sunscreen and insect repellent.

**Thursday April 21, 2016. Membership Meeting.** Speaker Lynn Barber, well known author and Big Year aficionado.

**Saturday April 23, 2016. Field Trip to Sabine Woods.** This trip will look for Neotropical migrants at the height of spring migration. We will assemble at Sabine Woods at 7:30 a.m. (You should be able to find the group if you are unable to be there quite that early.)

At Sabine Woods, there is a small parking area, with additional parking improvised using the roadside verges. Portable toilets will be available at the entrance.

This trip will seek Neotropical migrants at the height of spring migration, and involves relatively easy walking on the trails at Sabine Woods to look for migrant songbirds, although another option is to sit at the drip and wait for the birds to come to you. However, Hurricane Ike completely destroyed the boardwalks, and the trails may be muddy and slippery if it has rained in the prior day or two. Armadillos are active, so there may be holes to avoid! There is a \$5 sanctuary pass donation at Sabine Woods for those who are not members of Golden Triangle Audubon or Texas Ornitho-

logical Society. This field trip is especially suited for not-very-experienced birders. Often, we break into smaller groups, with an experienced birder in each group.

Bring insect repellent. Most participants will bring lunch. Facilities in Sabine Pass are limited, although gasoline and very limited food are now available.

Birding in late April can be exciting. However, we cannot promise anything, as the number of birds in the coastal woodlots is highly dependent on the weather conditions over the Gulf in the preceding days. Immediately after a cold front passes and the following day are usually considered to be among the most likely days to have a good concentration of migrants at favored coastal locations.

Sabine Woods is on the north side of Highway 87, 4.1 miles west of the stop sign in Sabine Pass. Take Highway 87 from Port Arthur to Sabine Pass, turn right at the stop sign, and go 4.1 miles.



EarthShare of Texas represents Audubon Foundation of Texas and the National Audubon Society in payroll contribution programs in workplaces throughout Texas. For more information about how you can support Audubon Foundation of Texas and the National Audubon Society at your workplace, call 1-800-GREENTX, or visit [www.earthshare-texas.org](http://www.earthshare-texas.org).

## Membership Renewals now Due Please consider allowing us to send to you electronically!

Membership in Golden Triangle Audubon is on a calendar year basis, running from January to December each year. Members of National Audubon Society who live in our official chapter territory are automatically members of Golden Triangle Audubon. Our chapter territory is officially defined by a (long) list of zip codes, but is more or less the counties of Jefferson, Orange and Hardin. For members in our territory, we do request a contribution of \$15 per year. Others, including members of National Audubon who live outside our territory, may become members of Golden Triangle Audubon and receive membership benefits – most importantly the *Brown Pelican* and admission to Sabine Woods – by paying the \$15 membership fee each year.

Membership dues may be paid by mailing a check to Golden Triangle Audubon at PO Box 1292, Nederland, Texas 77627-1292. A convenient membership blank to provide your name and address is on the back page of each issue of the *Brown Pelican*, or may be included on a separate piece of

paper enclosed with your check, (or we will use the name and address on your check). Alternatively, you may pay at any membership meeting (checks preferred). If you do that, please help our membership chair, Sheila Hebert ([sheilakhebert@hotmail.com](mailto:sheilakhebert@hotmail.com) or 409-767-1216), by having your name and address on a subscription blank or on a separate piece of paper.

New members who join in August or later in any year are members of Golden Triangle Audubon for the remainder of that year and all of the following year.

Also, if you join National Audubon as a new member **using the application blank on the back page of the *Brown Pelican***, then we do not expect a separate payment to Golden Triangle Audubon for the **first** year of membership. National Audubon membership is currently \$20 per year for one year from the date of payment. We are able to accept payment of National dues (checks payable to National Audubon preferred) **for new members** at our membership meetings, but please bring a completed membership blank.

### Electronic Delivery

As we indicated last month we have been having issues with delays in delivery of printed copies of the *Brown Pelican*. If you are reading this in a copy we sent to you by US mail, you may or may not be reading it in a timely timeframe. We certainly do not want to cut off any members who are unable to receive a copy electronically. At the same time, if you are able to receive an electronic copy, you can save us both expense and volunteer time.

When we email a copy to a member, we do that by attaching a copy of the Newsletter in pdf format to an email.

### How to request a change to electronic delivery.

Simply send an email to [johnawhittle@aol.com](mailto:johnawhittle@aol.com) giving the name and address that we are currently using to mail the *Brown Pelican* to you (so we can find your record) and confirm that we may email the *Brown Pelican* to you as an attachment at the email address you are using to send the message to us.

## Mild Winter Malaise

John Dillon, Athens, Louisiana

*The editor saw an interesting post by John Dillon on the LABIRD listserv and asked if we could use it in the Brown Pelican. John was kind enough to greatly expand his original post into this very interesting article.*

The winter meeting of the Louisiana Ornithological Society was January 29-31 in Monroe, LA, and I was one of several birders around the state asked to lead a field trip for members. I took a group to bird rural Union Parish, specifically just southeast of the 15,250-acre Bayou D'Arbonne Lake. The area is full of leaf-littered creek bottoms and pine cutovers with Smilax and Ligustrum, and I bird it for the D'Arbonne CBC. So, I was counting on showing my group high numbers of song birds and especially tons of sparrows. We had exactly two Fox Sparrow, one junco, eleven White-throated Sparrows, one Song Sparrow, and four Eastern Towhees. It was miserable! No Swamp Sparrow?? In creek bottoms around a huge lake? In January??? And after birding over three and a half hours and covering seven miles of country roads and bayous, we came up with an embarrassing 39 species. We traversed nearly the entire lake on a boat that afternoon and had not a single Lesser Scaup. In fact, in three hours of boating, we had only three species of duck and not a single grebe of any kind.

At the dinner that night, I asked my fellow trip leaders about their days, and they were equally crestfallen. Disappointment abounded. At least the gumbo was good!

The next day, I began exploring eBird, determined to search for an explanation. After all, the whole winter and fall had been pretty dismal in terms of numbers, especially with waterfowl and migratory woodland songbirds. Everyone had conjectured that the warm fall and winter was to blame, along with plenty of food up north due to heavy fall rains and warm temperatures there that produced enough food and comfy temps that many of the birds just didn't need to come this far south. But that was just a guess, and I looked to eBird to offer some truth, if not for weather conditions, at least for the scarcity of the birds.

Now, before I get into what I found there, I first need to explain to you exactly how warm this fall and winter were. And I should also say that all the weather data I mention were measured in Shreveport.

In meteorology, autumn is from September 1 through November 30. And NOAA reports that this was the third warmest autumn on record. That's since 1874. Ulysses S. Grant was President. And Edison was five years away from patenting the light bulb. So 2015 was the third warmest autumn in at least 140 years.

The year 2015 also gave us the warmest Christmas Eve on record for the Eastern US. It was a comfy 68 degrees in Syracuse, New York! Shreveport had five days of record high temperatures in the month of December alone.

But let's get back to autumn and look at some specific numbers. The average temperature for Shreveport in October, 2015, was 70.5. That's 4.1 degrees higher than normal. And I should add that "normal" actually refers to average

temperatures for the same region from 1981 through 2010. So, that's 4.1 degrees higher than all Octobers averaged together over the last 30 years. October, 2015, was the thirteenth warmest October on record, again since 1874, and the warmest since 2004.

November was even more out of the ordinary. November, 2015, was the 10th warmest November on record with an average of 60.6 degrees, which was 4.2 degrees higher than normal. It was the warmest since 2005. But October and November were simply a yawning prelude to a December that was so uncharacteristically warm, that we were seeing azaleas bloom.

December, 2015, had an average temperature of 56.2. That was 8.1 degrees above the normal average temperature of 48.1. For perspective, the normal average temperature for December in Tallahassee, Florida, is 53.2. Shreveport was 3 degrees warmer than Tallahassee.

Well, that's interesting. But how about we make it even more relatable? Let's look at it in terms of how much we had to run our heating and AC. Now, I admit that has nothing to do with the birds. But it is a unique way to understand exactly how warm it was in the fall and early winter of 2015. To do this, we have to talk in terms of what are called "heating degree days" and "cooling degree days." A heating degree day is, in its simplest form, the following two quantities multiplied together: the number of degrees on an individual day that the outside air temperature is below a level that would make you turn on your heater AND the number of days you turned on your heater because it was cold outside. The resulting number represents the amount of energy it takes to run your heater. So, if you ran your heater for 1 day because the outside air temperature was 1 degree too cool for comfort, your heating degree day would be  $1 \times 1$ , which is 1. If it were 2 degrees colder than comfortable, and you ran it for 1 day, your heating degree days would be 2, and so on. That means it took 2 times the amount of energy to heat up your home than when your heating degree day was 1.

Now, the total number of heating degree days in Shreveport in October is normally 80. What that means is this: you *usually* run your heater enough in October that you use 80 times the amount of energy than it would take to run it to heat up your house if the outside air temperature were only 1 degree colder than what was comfortable to you. But the actual number of heating degree days for October of 2015 was only 13.

The usual total number of heating degree days in Shreveport for November is 285. But it was so warm in November, 2015, that our actual heating degree days were 164. That's 121 times less the normal amount of energy.

And December? Wow. December. The usual total number of heating degree days in Shreveport for December is 531.

That's a LOT of energy! But for December, 2015? It was an even 300. December was, in fact, so warm, that people in Shreveport ran their air conditions five times more than their normal energy level.

Now for the birds. And I'm telling you now - I'm going to simplify this merely because the pattern for all of them is so similar. In other words, of the birds I researched on eBird (Common Loon, Horned Grebe, Wood Duck, Northern Shoveler, Lesser Scaup, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Blue-headed Vireo, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, House Wren, Winter Wren, American Pipit, White-throated Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, and Northern Cardinal), I could go through them one by one with you. But there's really no point. I could even separate them into birds that winter here versus birds that stay here year round or waterfowl versus passerines. But again, no point. That's because they all pretty much did the same thing in the winter of 2015.

For the months of December of 2015 and January of 2016, all these species were in greater numbers either slightly more east or slightly more north or both than in previous years. I compared 2015 with 2014, with the previous two years, the previous five years, and the previous ten years. These slight shifts are not exactly shifts in range, though. They are mostly shifts in species density. For example, Red-bellied Woodpecker range maps on eBird for the December - January of this winter versus December - January for 2010-2014 show basically the same range but higher densities of Red-bellied Woodpecker this winter from Northern Mississippi, Northern Alabama and Georgia north into the Midwestern states and up the east coastal states. The other species I mentioned show similar increases in density.

It's possible that one contributing effect was that, because of warmer temperatures all over the eastern US, more birders were out birding and, consequently, more birds were seen and reported than usual. However, that would have to be true for nearly all of the eastern US. Not to mention, that the warmer temperatures that encouraged more birders to go outside would have been even more encouraging for birders farther south, and so, if the birds actually were where they usually are, then we should have reported higher than usual numbers in the south. But we reported lower than usual numbers.

It's also important to note what all this does *not* mean. For example, I searched for species that are usually common or abundant. Species that have more specialized habitat requirements may not be showing the same effects. It also does not necessarily mean this will happen next year or the next. And it doesn't mean that temperature was the only factor; as mentioned earlier, rain amounts and the ensuing abundance of food might also play a role. Furthermore, because eBird has become much more popular and widespread in the last two or three years and because it began in 2002 and didn't get much use until about four or five years later, we can only really look at the last five or so years of eBird observations with any degree of accuracy. Add to that the fact that many rural areas of the east and southeast have few people who submit records to eBird, and you realize that we don't have a complete picture of either range or species density. But it *does* mean that if you were driving yourself mad because you went all day and couldn't find a House Wren, you're not alone. I couldn't find one, either.

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## Field Trip to Cattail Marsh – 20 February 2016

Beautiful weather and a big turnout are great way to start out a field trip and the Golden Triangle Audubon Society's February field trip to Cattail Marsh had both. But what good is beautiful weather without lots of birds for all of those people to look at? Luckily, Cattail Marsh provided lots of those too!

Cattail Marsh is located in Tyrrell Park and is, technically, the back end of the Beaumont water treatment plant. Although this might not sound like the most desirable place to spend a Saturday morning, sewage ponds are often bird magnets. Indeed, the sewage ponds and natural wetlands of Cattail Marsh combined with the woodlands of the park make the Tyrrell Park area one of the best birding locations on the upper Texas coast at any time of year. It did not take long for this to be demonstrated to the assembled birders. The wooded areas around the parking lot are often productive and on this day gave the group Red-headed Woodpecker, House Wren, White-throated Sparrow along with good numbers of Chipping Sparrows and American Pipits. A hunting Accipiter (a genus of mostly bird-eating hawks) zipped through the parking lot area too quickly to firmly establish its specific identity.

Leaving the parking area and heading up onto the levies of the marsh itself, many more birds quickly became evident.

Sharp ears detected the odd calls of a pair of Wood Ducks as they flew overhead. The first cells of the marsh contained many ducks with Green-winged Teal being the most prominent. Blue-winged Teal and Northern Shoveler were also easily found and a little more looking produced a few American Wigeon as well. The experienced Cattail Marsh veterans of the group knew that a little more looking in these first cells was likely to produce another prize – Cinnamon Teal. This beautiful western duck is very uncommon on the upper Texas coast but Cattail Marsh has consistently been the best and easiest place to find it for many miles in any direction. And of course, Cattail Marsh came through again for the birders as several Cinnamon Teal were enjoyed by all.

Other water birds were also present in good numbers. Pied-billed Grebes were obvious from the start, swimming and diving in small numbers throughout the marsh. Common Gallinules stalked through reeds while lots of American Coots were obvious in all of the open water. More typical rails were also common on the day though most were heard and not seen. Tiny Sora called frequently and a few were cooperative enough to spend some time in the open showing off their yellow bills and black masks. The more secretive Virginia

Rails were tougher to get out but, with a little patience, a few very briefly observed as they crept through the reeds or darted through small open areas. Unfortunately, no King Rails were located on this day though they are often present at this location.

Although most famous for its water birds, song birds are found in good variety around the marsh as well. Yellow-rumped Warblers were abundant in the trees and there were a few Orange-crowned Warblers around as well. A Common Yellowthroat was heard chipping from the marsh while a beautiful eastern-type Palm Warbler was seen bobbing its tail from a nearby willow tree. An Eastern Phoebe did its flycatching routine from a convenient perch while a White-eyed Vireo preferred to be heard and not seen in a thicket. Sharp eyes spotted a single Brown Creeper winding its way up a tree trunk but Savannah Sparrows were easily seen by everyone along the edges of the levees. Song and Swamp Sparrows were also present in smaller numbers.

Raptors were not especially numerous on this trip but there were a few to be found. A Northern Harrier cruised low over the water, frightening ducks and coots as it went. A few Red-tailed Hawks soared around high over the marsh while a single American Kestrel hunted from a perch. One Red-tailed Hawk, also remained perched. This was a beautiful rufous morph Red-tailed that was perched in a tree on the edge of the marsh. Presumably this same bird (or at least one very similar) has been present in this area in the winter for several years. The stars of the raptor show at Cattail Marsh are clearly the Bald Eagles. A nest has been present on the back side of the marsh for some years and the eagles are often visible either at the nest, perched nearby or hunting for food in the marsh. On this trip, only one Bald Eagle was sighted as it sat defending its nest. The bird made some motions as if it might be feeding young but the enormous nest is too deep to tell for sure if there were any eaglets in it.

Lots of other birds were located on the day, some very common and some more scarce. Many gulls flew overhead including all three of our common species, Laughing, Ring-billed and Herring Gulls. A few Wilson's Snipe gave cooperative scope views and both Black-necked Stilts and American Avocets were easily seen. Long-billed Dowitchers were common and a single Spotted Sandpiper was seen in its traditional spot. White Ibis and White-faced Ibis were present in small numbers but it took some time to identify the day's only Glossy Ibis. Other wading birds present included Great Blue and Little Blue Herons, Tricolored Herons and Black-crowned Night-Heron among others.

One of the last destinations on this trip is cell one, a deep water cell at the north end of the marsh. This cell often contains diving ducks and other species that prefer deeper water. On this day, Ruddy Ducks and Lesser Scaup were the most common but they were not alone. A single Ring-necked Duck was located among the scaup and eventually, all got looks at a female Bufflehead as well. Diligent observation also got the remaining birders looks at a few Eared Grebes that were present. These little grebes made it difficult by constantly diving but one pair that stayed on top of the water finally gave good looks.

With hundreds of ducks easily seen, secretive rails glimpsed and lots of wading birds, song birds other species

present (including American Alligators, Nutria and River Otter), Cattail Marsh and Tyrrell Park combine to form one of the top birding destinations in the region. And top it off with a Bald Eagle nest? What more could a birder want? Winter is a great time to see these species but the real gift of this birding gem is that it is excellent at any time of year. Maybe the group will have to come back in the summer for the Purple Gallinules and Least Bitterns!

The following species were recorded by the trip leaders:

Wood Duck (2); Gadwall (7); American Wigeon (9); Blue-winged Teal (60); Cinnamon Teal (5); Northern Shoveler (75); Green-winged Teal (1560); Ring-necked Duck (1); Lesser Scaup (27); Bufflehead (1); Ruddy Duck (100); Pied-billed Grebe (7); Eared Grebe (3); Neotropic Cormorant (5); Double-crested Cormorant (3); Great Blue Heron (2); Great Egret (3); Snowy Egret (4); Little Blue Heron (2); Tricolored Heron (3); Black-crowned Night-Heron (2); White Ibis (4); Glossy Ibis (1); White-faced Ibis (14); Black Vulture (45); Turkey Vulture (25); Northern Harrier (1); Sharp-shinned/Cooper's Hawk (1); Bald Eagle (1); Red-tailed Hawk (2); Red-tailed Hawk rufous morph (1); Virginia Rail (7); Sora (5); Common Gallinule (25); American Coot (120); Black-necked Stilt (18); American Avocet (25); Killdeer (4); Spotted Sandpiper (1); Lesser Yellowlegs (9); Least Sandpiper (8); Long-billed Dowitcher (75); Wilson's Snipe (3); Laughing Gull (140); Ring-billed Gull (225); Herring Gull (6); Red-headed Woodpecker (2); Red-bellied Woodpecker (2); Northern Flicker (1); American Kestrel (1); Eastern Phoebe (3); White-eyed Vireo (1); Tree Swallow (12); Brown Creeper (1); House Wren (1); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (2); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (3); American Robin (5); European Starling (4); American Pipit (25); Orange-crowned Warbler (3); Common Yellowthroat (2); Palm Warbler (Yellow) (1); Yellow-rumped Warbler (18); Chipping Sparrow (24); White-crowned Sparrow (3); Savannah Sparrow (15); Song Sparrow (2); Swamp Sparrow (3); Northern Cardinal (4); Red-winged Blackbird (26); Western/Eastern Meadowlark (10); Boat-tailed Grackle (3); Great-tailed Grackle (8); 71 species.

*Steve Mayes*

## Audubon

### Conservation

By protecting birds, we're also safeguarding the Western hemisphere's great natural heritage for future generations, preserving our shared quality of life and fostering a healthier environment for us all.

### Advocacy

Audubon is a respected and influential voice on public policy issues, from town halls to the U.S. Capitol. We have the power to convene diverse stakeholders to solve even the toughest problems.

### Education

A commitment to education is at the heart of the Audubon tradition. By inspiring more people in more places to value and protect the natural world, we are laying the foundation for future conservation.

# Bird Sightings – February 2016

For this column, we review, looking for rare and very rare species, all credible eBird and other submitted records for the Texas counties we have always covered – Angelina, Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, Newton, Orange, Sabine, San Augustine and Tyler. We also review, looking for very rare or vagrant species only, records for Chambers, Galveston (High Island and Bolivar only) and Liberty counties in Texas, and Calcasieu and Cameron Parishes (west of the Calcasieu River only) in Louisiana.

The format of the listing is Species – Date – County-more precise location if available – (number) – Observer(s) with sometimes a comment on the reason it is noteworthy.

**Commentary:** Space has not been available for much comment in the last few months February is usually one of the "slower" months as birding activity usually slows considerably. It will pick up next month as birders anticipate the start of spring migration.

The sightings below include a good number of wintering hummingbirds. In many cases, especially if there are multiple hummingbirds at one location as there often are, it is very difficult to be sure how many hummingbirds are present. Female and young male hummingbirds are all very similar, and a brief look at a bird at a feeder is usually not sufficient to identify it to species much less look for marks to identify the individual bird. There are always surprises when Sumita

Prasad comes over and bands the hummingbirds that she is able to catch. It seems that often the homeowner did not know about some of the species that were actually there. We cannot realistically present each individual sighting, so we summarize as best we can, showing the last reported date in February with a "+" to indicate there is no reason to suspect the bird left on that date. Many of these birds will stay well into March.

For other species, for the most part it has been fairly normal winter. A few species have been seen more often than usual. Groove-billed Ani is one of these species. There have been wintering birds of species that only very rarely winter in Southeast Texas. Birds in that category below include Summer Tanager, Purple Gallinule, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. The Louisiana Waterthrush is probably an early migrant, as wintering Waterthrushes are almost always Northern Waterthrushes.

This has not been an "irruption" year. There have been only a few reports of Purple Finches, relatively few of Red-breasted Nuthatches, and few of Eastern Towhee or other species that occasionally come further south in significant numbers.. John Dillon's excellent article elsewhere in this issue shows that many more common species were more numerous than usual north and east of the Gulf coastal states. But always remember that bird distribution changes need to look at decades, not merely one year.

## Seen in our Core Counties (listed above)

Glossy Ibis	Jan 20	JEF-TP (1) GTAS Field Trip
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	Nov-Feb 14+	HAI-Rose Hill Acres (1f) JM
	Feb 13-14_	HAI-Rose Hill Acres (1m) JM
	Jan 8 Feb 6	JEF-NEDR (1) HS
	Jan 2-Feb 27+	JEF-NEDR (1+) JJW
Black-chinned Humm.	Jan 12-Feb 22+	JEF-NEDR (1) SM
	Jan-Feb 27+	JEF-NEDR (2+) JJW
Ruby-thr/Blk-chin Humm	Feb13-19	JEF-NEDR (1) HS
Anna's Hummingbird	Dec 4-Feb 14+	HAI-Rose Hill Acres (1m) JM
Broad-tailed Humm.	Feb 1-Feb 24+	JEF-NEDR (1f uncfmd) JJW
	Feb 12-14+	HAI-Rose Hill Acres (1m) JM
Rufous Hummingbird	Nov 1-Feb 26+	JEF-NEDR (1) HS
	Nov-Feb 24+	HAI-Rose Hill Acres (1) JM
	Feb 12-14+	HAI-Rose Hill Acres (1) JM
Rufous/Allen's Humm.	Feb 8-27+	JEF-NEDR (1) JW
	Feb 13	JEF-NEDR (1) HS
Selasphorus Humm	Feb 19	JEF-NEDR (1) HS
Red-cockaded Woodp.	Feb 10	JAS-Martin Dies SP (2) Charles Young
Brown Creeper	Feb 20	JEF-TP (1) GTAS Field Trip unusual so far south in mid winter
Louisiana Waterthrush	Feb 25	JEF-SW (1) JHH
Black-and-white Warbler	Feb 25	JEF-SW (1) JHH
Bachman's Sparrow	Feb 15	JAS-Boykin Springs (2) Letha Slogle
	Feb 15	ANG-Boykin Springs entrance road (3) Annie Benzon
Harris's Sparrow	Feb 13	JAS-CR841 in Buna (6) Larry Richardson (no details)
Summer Tanager	Dec 26-Feb 15+	ORA-N of Claiborne West Park (1) Sheila Babin
Black-headed Grosbeak	Jan 26-Feb 15+	ORA N of Claiborne West Park (1) Sheila Babin

Purple Finch Feb 13 HAI-Rose Hill Acres (1f) JM

## Nearby Counties (very rare species only)

Purple Gallinule	Feb 1-26+	CHA-ANWR_Shoveler Pond (1) multiple observers
Burrowing Owl	Jan 29-Feb27+	CHA-ANWR-Frozen Point (1) multiple observers
Groove-billed Ani	Feb 12-27+	CHA-ANWR-Oyster Bayou Boat Ramp (2) multiple observers
Say's Phoebe	Jan 23-Feb 26+	CHA-FM1985 1 mile east of Skillern Tract (1) multiple observers
Great Kiskadee	May-Feb 27+	CAL-Hiidden Ponds RV Park (2) multiple observers
Couch's/Trop. Kingbird	Feb 16	CHA-FM1985 (1) Marc Gregoire, no details.
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	Feb 21	CHA-ANWR (1) Dale Wolck
Rose-breast. Grosbeak	Jan19-Feb 9	GAL-Boy Scout Woods (1f) Joel Throckmorton, multiple obs.
Black-headed Grosbeak	Jan 5-Feb 21+	CHA-Magnolia Bend Rd (1) Jan and David Hanson
Painted Bunting	Jan 3-Feb 9	GAL-Boy Scout Woods (1) multiple observers
Yellow-headed Blackbird	Feb 13	CAL-Farmers Rice Mill LA397 (6) William Matthews

**Abbreviations used:** ANG – Angelina County; ANWR – Anahuac NWR; BTNP – Big Thicket National Preserve; CAL – Calcasieu Parish; CAM – Cameron Parish, LA; CHA – Chambers County; GAL – Galveston County; HAI – Hardin County;; HI – High Island; HS – Harlan Stewart; JAS – Jasper County; JAW – John Whittle; JEF – Jefferson County; JHH – John Haynes; JJW – Jana and John Whittle; JM – John Mariani; LIB – Liberty County; MC – Michael Cooper;; RL – Randy Lewis; SAB – Sabine County; SW – Sabine Woods; TH – Thpmas Hellweg TP – Tyrrell Park including Cattail Marsh; WJC – West Jefferson County.

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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 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 fee. Most rare bird sightings in Texas are posted on the TEXBIRDS listserv. Archives of the listserv are at [www.freelists.org/archive/texbirds](http://www.freelists.org/archive/texbirds). It is not necessary to subscribe to the listserv to view the archives, which include all recent postings. Postings for the last two weeks are also available at <http://birding.aba.org/maillist/TX>.

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..>