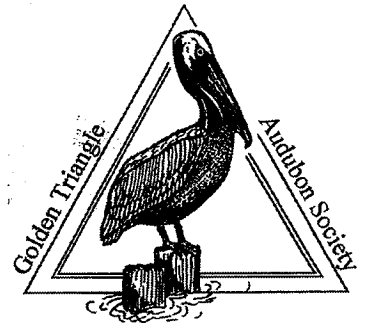


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 24 No. 1

January 2018

Membership Meeting
Thursday January 18, 2018 7:00 p.m.
Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont

Cattail Marsh

John Whittle and Harlan Stewart

Cattail Marsh has become one of the premier birding attractions in the Golden Triangle Area. Originally constructed in 1993, and rehabilitated a few years ago, the Marsh serves as the final stage in the City of Beaumont waste water treatment system.

Water from the primary treatment facility is piped under Hillebrandt Bayou into the first cell of the Marsh, and thereafter percolates over several days through one or more of the other cells where the vegetation helps reduce the excess nitrogen and phosphorus content. The water is then pumped over Willow Marsh Bayou into a large natural wetland and eventually finds its way into Hillebrandt Bayou and on to the Gulf of Mexico. The total area including the natural wetland is about 900 acres.

During the cooler months (September through April), the Marsh is home to large numbers of wintering ducks. There are some waterbirds that breed in summer. Other avian attractions include a pair of Bald Eagles that nest along the periphery every winter, and a number of Least Grebes that have been present and breeding for a number of years. The program will illustrate the various areas of the Marsh and some of the 263 species of bird that have been observed there.

We will meet this month in the Garden Center, although it is possible that the sheetrock that was wet in Hurricane Harvey and cut out may not have been replaced by then. 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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Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Web Site for more information
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

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The Brown Pelican is published monthly except July by the Golden Triangle Audubon Society, P. O. Box 1292, Nederland, Texas 77627-1292

Calendar of Events

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. 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.

Thursday January 18, 2018. Membership Meeting. Tentative: Program on Cattail Marsh. Harlan Stewart and John Whittle. See page 1 for details.

Saturday January 20, 2018. Field Trip to Cattail Marsh, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont. Meet at the parking lot for Cattail Marsh at 8:00 a.m. The parking lot is accessed from the loop road round the main picnic areas in Tyrrell Park. Many birds can be seen from the boardwalk with minimal walking, **but the group will probably make a leisurely three-or-so-mile hike round the various cells in the marsh. Be advised that, while you can turn around and retrace your steps at any point, there are no meaningful "shortcuts" after you start on the levee between cells 3 and 4.** If you don't want to walk that far, there will be someone on the boardwalk to help you identify the many birds in the near cells. Walking is on the levees; the main ones are graveled, but some of the interior ones are essentially mowed grass. This will be a good trip for beginning to intermediate birders, as most of the waterfowl and wading birds are relatively easy to study in the open water areas.

Directions to Tyrrell Park From the South

Go "north" on US69/96/287 around the south side of Beaumont. Take Texas 124 (south or west, whichever it is signed) towards Fannett (left turn under the highway). Travel about 1/2 mile to the first light. At the first light, turn left onto Tyrrell Park Road and go about 3/4 mile.

Turn left into Tyrrell Park through the nice new arch.

Almost immediately turn left at the conservatory into the parking lot for the Garden Center.

From IH10

Exit at Walden Road on the west side of Beaumont.

Go south of Walden Road for about 1/2 mile to the first light.

At the light go straight over Highway 124 onto Tyrrell Park Road and go about 3/4 mile.

Turn left into Tyrrell Park through the nice new arch.

Almost immediately turn left at the conservatory into the parking lot for the Garden Center.

Thursday February 15, 2018. Membership Meeting. Details in a future issue.

Saturday February 17, 2018. Field Trip to Anahuac NWR. We plan to meet at the Visitor Information Station just beyond the entrance at 8:30 a.m. There are clean public flushing toilets there, accessible even when the Information Station is not open. To reach Anahuac NWR from Winnie, take Highway 124 south to FM1985. (It is 11.0 miles from IH-10 and half a mile less from Highway 73.) Turn right (west) on FM1985 and proceed about **11 miles** to the well-marked **MAIN Anahuac NWR Entrance Road** on the left (south). (**Do not be tempted by your GPS to enter the East Unit which is only about four miles from Highway 124.**) The entrance to the Main Refuge is just over 3 miles down the Entrance road. Obey the speed limits, especially the 15 mph limit in the information station area! Watch



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.com.

Local Area Christmas Bird Counts

[Here are brief reports from those local area Christmas Counts for which we have details at press time. We will post more detailed reports on www.goldentriangleaudubon.org as soon as we are able.]

Johnson Bayou CBC – 14 December 2017

The total number of species seen was 118, which is in the middle of the recent normal range. Conditions were fairly favorable for ducks this year, but the water level around count day was quite high, increasing the numbers of the diving duck species, and lowering those of the dabbling ducks, largely because they were in areas not as accessible. No Greater White-fronted Geese were seen. Fifty-three American Widgeon is quite a high number for his count but the numbers on the Upper Texas Coast (UTC) are quite variable. Anecdotal reports had suggested there were a lot of Gadwall on the UTC this year, but the number counted was relatively normal. Ring-necked Ducks were seen in very high numbers. The absence of Canvasback was a little surprising. Teal were almost certainly around in numbers, but water of their preferred depth may have been in remote parts of the circle, and only one modest flock of Green-winged Teal and a low number of Blue-winged Teal were found.

Pied-billed Grebes obviously had a good year. It was very obvious that there were a lot of American coots around this year, although the 10,365 recorded was not a new high for the count. White Ibis were seen in good numbers. Shorebird habitat doubtless exists in the count circle in good amount, but most of it is essentially inaccessible. Twelve Marbled Godwits were seen, only the second time this species has been found.

The presence of five Crested Caracara confirmed that this species is now well established in SW Louisiana and likely continues to spread eastward. The number of terns found in the circle is very variable. This year, good numbers of Royal Terns were seen, and a Gull-billed Tern, not found every year.

Woodland birds were not particularly well represented this year, with no Pine Warblers and very few White-throated Sparrows.

Turkey Creek CBC – 16 December 2017

Thirteen participants enjoyed reasonably nice weather for the fortieth Turkey Creek Christmas Count. The 69 species found was a somewhat above average total despite the fact that the major body of water in the count circle, the lake in Wildwood had been drained because of concerns over the integrity of the dam. Nevertheless, the only species new to the count was a species associated with water, a Bald Eagle which flew over Lake Hyatt. Finding species new to the count is not easy with 40 years of history. But Bald Eagles are becoming increasingly common in Southeast Texas, and the species that should elicit the most interest was Henslow's Sparrow. Three were seen in the young woodland just east of the Big Thicket National Preserve headquarters area, and another in the Hickory Creek Savannah Unit. The species had been seen in both locations in the last one or two years, so there is some hope that small populations may be becoming established

winter residents in both areas. Other species of note seen on the count included a White-breasted Nuthatch. This species is apparently present in the area in very small numbers in the area. The vast majority of local sightings come from units of the Big Thicket NP and National Forests. A Northern Harrier had presumably wandered a little north of its usual winter territory, while a Pine Siskin in the vicinity of Lake Hyatt was traveling in a flock of American Goldfinches

Beech Creek CBC – 23 December 2017

Beech Creek is a little further north than the other counts Golden Triangle Audubon is involved in, but with wooded areas including Martin Dies State Park, and Steinhagen Lake, it has varied habitat. The 84 species seen on the count on December 23 was on the high side of average, conducted in good but somewhat chilly weather, with light winds. Unusual species included Blue-winged Teal in two locations on the lake, an Eared Grebe on the west side of Steinhagen Lake, and a dark Ibis (Glossy/White-faced) in Martin Dies. A Rusty Blackbird in the Cherokee Unit of Martin Dies, and an American Woodcock in the Walnut Ridge Unit rounded out an interesting list of rarities. Also of note was a total of 16 Eastern Towhees, nearly tripling the previous high count.

Sea Rim SP CBC – 28 December 2017

A cold wind and cold temperatures greeted participants in the Sea Rim State Park count on December 28. Although this weather did not encourage birds to be active and visible, the count turned up an interesting list of species rare enough in the area to need details. A Great Kiskadee which has been seen regularly at Sabine Woods since April 2017 was recorded on the count, and others have been regularly recorded in nearby areas of Texas and southwest Louisiana. Groove billed Anis have now been seen on the count for three consecutive years. This year's seven individuals were in the parking area at Texas Point NWR. By December, most Swainson's Hawks are wintering in the pampas of Argentina. But each winter, one or two turn up in winter on the Upper Texas Coast, and an apparent second year bird was found near Backridge Road (just north of Sabine Pass). Lingering Warblers seen included a Northern Waterthrush and a Nashville Warbler in private wooded areas south of Backridge Road. Finally, two species that are reasonably common a short distance away from the coast, but not usually in the count circle were Wood Duck and Chipping Sparrow. Unfortunate circumstances prevented the interior of Texas Point NWR and the northeast corner of McFaddin NWR from being covered, but likely this will significantly impact only the numbers of some common water birds such as Green-winged Teal, Gadwall and American Coots. The Salt Bayou Unit of J D Murphree WMA was covered, so some individuals of most species were counted. The tentative total number of species seen was 146.

Fall 2017 Migration – Sabine Woods

This is the fourth fall migration season for which we have attempted to provide comprehensive data on the fall migrants passing through Sabine Woods, and also some of the arriving winter residents. The tables include sightings at Sabine Woods only. There were only a few sightings along Highway 87 (including the Texas Point NWR parking lot and at Sea Rim State Park during the fall. The most interesting of those have been reported in the Bird Sightings columns in the last few issues.

There was one weather event that significantly reduced and hindered birding from August 27 to September 6 and that was Hurricane Harvey. Although the rainfall extended for only five or six days, the subsequent lowland flooding made Sabine Pass and Sabine Woods inaccessible until September 7. Because of the local topography, Sabine Woods was not significantly affected by high water.

For the most part, the numbers on the table speak for themselves. Since Sabine Woods is primarily a woodlot, we have not attempted to analyze non-woodland species such as sparrows and Swallows, even though many are recorded at the Woods. We include a few wintering species to document their arrival dates. The fall migration season at Sabine Woods can only be described as disappointing, even allowing for the gap in observations. In many ways, the fall migration subsequent to Hurricane Harvey was dominated by unusually warm weather locally and further north that apparently allowed many migrants to migrate in the later part of their normal migration window. However, the effect was not uniform across all species groups. Flycatcher migration, always prominent in fall migration at Sabine Woods seemed to this observer to be close to normal in timing, if somewhat reduced in numbers, although it must be noted that the ten days that the Woods were inaccessible included the period when *Empidonax* flycatcher migration is normally at or close to its peak. A Western Wood-Pewee, thoroughly confirmed on the basis of its song and calls was the first known sighting of the species at Sabine Woods.

Swainson's Warblers were detected only once this year but again one very rare fall Blackpoll Warbler was seen well and photographed. But a number of warbler species were not seen at all during the fall; Golden-winged Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler and Black-throated Blue Warbler. A review of eBird shows that these species were almost completely absent from the Upper Texas and Southwest Louisiana coasts this fall except for one well documented Cape May and one Bay-breasted Warbler. One bright aspect was the relative abundance of Wilson's Warblers after two very sparse years. Let's hope this translates into more wintering birds.

Migrant Vireo numbers were mediocre at best, although Blue-headed Vireos (a wintering rather than passage species) did appear in numbers in late fall. Thrushes are never seen in numbers in fall as they seem to migrate through the lower 48 much further east than they do in spring, a trait they share with a significant number of other species, including a number of passerines and shorebirds that take the arduous route direct from New England to northern South America. As usual, however, there was no shortage of Gray Catbirds in the later

part of the fall migration period. Relatively few tanagers were seen and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were almost absent.

We rely on eBird reports for most of our data, but try to include only corroborated reports. Determining if a report should be included can, admittedly, be a somewhat arbitrary decision. In the heart of the season, we usually have multiple reports for any given day, and it is very rare that an unusual bird is seen by only one person. Advances in camera technology have meant that photographs good enough for confirmation of the identification are very often obtained, and now posted on eBird. Unusual species posted on eBird without any details are not included. Reports with multiple questionable identifications in the same report were not used. We know that this undoubtedly results in the exclusion of a few sightings that are correctly identified and we apologize to those observers, but would encourage them in future to add brief comments in their eBird postings, especially if they know there were few other observers present on that day, and especially if they do not regularly bird in southeast Texas. It is important that observers reporting species that can be easily confused with other more common species indicate that they were aware of the relatively rarity of the species, and paid special attention as a result.

This compilation would not have been possible without the efforts of many birders. First and foremost, we thank John Haynes who birded the Woods almost every day during the peak of migration. We used reports regularly posted by Michael Cooper, Sheila Hebert, Thomas Hellweg, Steve Mayes, and John Whittle.

We also used reports posted on eBird by Jim Armacost, Mike Austin, Chris Bergmann, Gary Binderim, Gailon Brehm, J&L Bryan, Jimma Byrd, Teresa Connell, Jeff Corcoran, Howard Davis, Sandy Dillard, Eric Faria, Joe Fischer, Susan Foster, Tony Frank, Tim Hebert, Frank Konczak, Dominic Le Croisette, Steve Metchis, Janet Neath, Grace Oliver, Randy Pinkston, Carl Poldrack, Nina Rach, Albert Ribes, Michelle Rometry, David Sarkozi, Byron Stone, Bob White, Catherine Winans, and Bill Wright.

Space and print size considerations have necessitated leaving a few species off the table that were seen only a few times during the fall. These were:

Swainson's Hawk: 28 Oct (1), 29 Oct (1)
Vermilion Flycatcher: 30 Sep (1); 05 Nov (1), 06 Nov (1)
Ash-throated Flycatcher: 28 Oct (1), 29 Oct (1)
Western Wood-Pewee: 24-28 Sep (1)
Red-breasted Nuthatch: 11 Oct (1), 23 Oct (1), 29 Oct (1)
Pine Warbler: 11 Oct (1), 23 Oct (1); 11 Nov (2)
Black-throated Gray Warbler: 07 Sep (1), 29 Oct (1)
Brown Creeper: 20 Oct (1), 23 Oct (1), 28 Oct (1), 10 Nov (1)
Note that one of the Traill's Flycatcher on 07 Sep was identified as a Willow Flycatcher, one on 11 Sep as an Alder Flycatcher, and one on 14 Sep as an Alder Flycatcher.

If the small print causes you difficulties, please remember that each issue of the *Brown Pelican* is posted on the web at www.goldentriangleaudubon.org as a pdf image that can be easily enlarged.

John A. Whittle

Fall 2017 Migration -- Sabine Woods

	July		August													Jul/Aug Total	September														September							
	25	31	4	9	11	14	16	18	20	21	22	23	24	26	Total		7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	22	23	24	26	27	28	29	30
Nbr reports	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	14	4	6	5	3	3	4	4	2	3	8	2	1	1	2	3	4	7	2	2	6	1	6	
Swainson's Warbler						1									1																							
Tennessee Warbler																		1															1	1			3	
Orange-crowned Warbler																																						
Nashville Warbler																						1											2	1	8	2	2	
Mourning Warbler																3	2	3	1	3	2	5	4	3	2												1	1
Kentucky Warbler			1											12	14		1					1																
Common Yellowthroat	2	2	1	2	3	2	1	1		1	1				16	1	2	3	2	4	1	1	2	2	8	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	3	3	5		
Hooded Warbler			2	1			2	2	1		1		2	12	23	2	1							1													2	
American Redstart										1				4	5	5	5	5	2	4	3	3	2	3	1		1	1	3	1	1	2	1			2	10	
Northern Parula															3	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1				1	1	1				2	1	2	
Magnolia Warbler																2	3	1	7	4	1	1														1	8	
Blackburnian Warbler																							1															
Yellow Warbler		3	4			4	4	3	4	1			4	27	1	6	5	4	3	2	3	8	1	2	1	1		2	2	2	2	1		4				
Chestnut-sided Warbler																					1																	
Blackpoll Warbler																					1																	
Palm Warbler																																						
Pine Warbler																																						
Yellow-rumped Warbler																																						
Yellow-throated Warbler																		1	1			2																
Prairie Warbler																1		1		1		3	1						1		1	1						
Black-throated Gray Warbler																1																						
Black-throated Green Warbler																1			1	1															2	1	1	
Canada Warbler								2		2		3		7	4	5	10	2	3	8	2			1			1	1	2	1	4	2		1		2		
Wilson's Warbler																3	2	4	3	3	4	5	5	6	6	1	3	2	6	5	10	6	5	2	5	3	5	
Yellow-breasted Chat																12	3	4	4	3	7		1						2	2	1				2	1	2	
Summer Tanager																						3														1		
Scarlet Tanager																						1																
Rose-breasted Grosbeak																					1																	
Blue Grosbeak																	3	3	1		12	6		5	1		1		3	6	2	1	4		5	2		
Indigo Bunting																	2	5	1			2	1				1		2					3		1		
Painted Bunting		1	2	3	3		2	2	3	1			3	20	3	3	3	1	4	6	3	7	6	6	1		2									1		
Dickcissel																											1											
Orchard Oriole		3	6	5	4	23	6	14	20	5	2	11	5	13	117	2	1	9		6		3	4	4	2	4			2									
Baltimore Oriole																11	9	12	6	2	13	1			1	1	1	2		6	2	4			1		2	

Fall 2017 Migration -- Sabine Woods

	Sep	October																												November			Oct/Nov	Grand
	Total	1	4	5	6	7	8	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	25	28	29	30	4	10	11	Total	Total				
Nbr reports		2	1	1	1	4	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	1	1	4	1	3	1	10	5	1	1	1	2						
Green Heron	25					1	1		1	1				1				1	1										7	46				
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	5					1																							1	8				
Broad-winged Hawk	27	1		1	1	1						1	1	8	1						1	1	4	5	1				27	57				
Swainson's Hawk																							1	1					2	2				
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	9													1										1					2	33				
Chuck-will's-widow	24	1				1													1										3	27				
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	73		1	1		1																							3	84				
Olive-sided Flycatcher	10			1	1																								2	22				
Eastern Wood-Pewee	41		1	1		2	1		2	1		1							2	1	1								13	63				
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	15					1																							1	19				
Acadian Flycatcher	11																													12				
Alder Flycatcher	2																													2				
Willow Flycatcher	1																													2				
Alder/Willow (Traill's) Flycatcher	23								1	1																			2	29				
Least Flycatcher	33					1			1				1																3	37				
Empidonax sp.	43			1		2	1		2												1								7	55				
Eastern Phoebe					1	1			1			1		3	1	1		1	2	3	4	8	5	7	3		5	8	55	55				
Great Crested Flycatcher	60				2																								2	87				
Eastern Kingbird	13																													52				
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	5			2	2	1	1		3	7				4								35							55	61				
White-eyed Vireo	63	3		3	3	5	3		8	6		6	2	2	3	1	1		1		2					1			50	113				
Yellow-throated Vireo	1														1						1								2	3				
Blue-headed Vireo	4			2	1									1	4						3	3	2	10	3		5	7	41	45				
Philadelphia Vireo	1		1						1																				2	3				
Warbling Vireo	5						1		1	1																			3	8				
Red-eyed Vireo	33					1			1	1				1	1														5	43				
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	12																				1		3	20					24	36				
Purple Martin	2																													5				
Tree Swallow	22								5	6			2	8	3	12					11		15	25		10	10	20	127	149				
Bank Swallow	1																													1				
Barn Swallow	26								3				3	3	4	1					3		20	8					45	114				
Cliff Swallow	7																				2								2	9				
Cave Swallow																													0	0				
Cliff/Cave Swallow	6																						4						4	11				
Red-breasted Nuthatch									1												1			1					3	3				
House Wren			1		2				4	5	3			3	1	1		2	3		3	3	6	3	1		3	2	46	46				
Carolina Wren	8					1	1	1		1	1			1	2						2		2						12	20				
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	409	14	15	14	18	16	18	8	26	19			9	29	25	7	2	12	15	12	12		20	15		1	10	12	329	828				
Golden-crowned Kinglet																						3	4	8	3		4	15	37	37				
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	9	1		4	6	5	1		10	8				18	25	4	1	5	8	3	7		12	30	6	2	30	40	226	235				
Swainson's Thrush	4			2		1			2																				5	9				
Hermit Thrush														2	4						1		1	2			4	3	17	17				
Wood Thrush																		1											1	1				
Gray Catbird	13			2	2	3	2		55	11			1	14	3	1		2	3	2	3		1	2		2			109	130				
Brown Thrasher	33	10	6	6	4	6	2	7	16	9	1		12	11	8	4	6	4	8	2	5		3	8	2		2	1	143	189				
Ovenbird	4		2	1		1																							4	8				
Worm-eating Warbler	4			1		1																							2	9				
Louisiana Waterthrush																														10				
Northern Waterthrush	5																													7				
Blue-winged Warbler	4												1	4															5	10				
Black-and-white Warbler	65	2	3	6	4	4		4	12	5	2		2	6	4	1		1	4	2	1		2	1		1	1	68	157					
Prothonotary Warbler	4																													7				

Fall 2017 Migration -- Sabine Woods

	Sep	October																												November			Oct/Nov	Grand
	Total	1	4	5	6	7	8	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	25	28	29	30	4	10	11	Total	Total				
Nbr reports		2	1	1	1	4	1	1	3	1	1	1	1	3	3	1	1	1	4	1	3	1	10	5	1	1	1	2						
Swainson's Warbler																														1				
Tennessee Warbler	6												2	1		1		1		1				3				9	15					
Orange-crowned Warbler								2					2	1	1		1			1	3		3	8		6	5	33	33					
Nashville Warbler	16				1			6			2		6	4						1	1		1	4				26	42					
Mourning Warbler	32								1																			1	33					
Kentucky Warbler	2																											0	16					
Common Yellowthroat	53	1		3	2	1		4	3		1		2	2			2	1		1		1					24	93						
Hooded Warbler	6	1	2	1	1	3	1	2			1		1	2			1	1	1	1							19	48						
American Redstart	55	2	1	3		4	1	4	1		1		5	3	1		3	3	2	1		3	2				40	100						
Northern Parula	19			1	1	1		12	4		1		6			1		1								1	1	30	49					
Magnolia Warbler	28	2	6	3	6	6	1	4	1		2	2	7	10	2		3	3	2	2						1	63	91						
Blackburnian Warbler	1					1																					1	2						
Yellow Warbler	50			1		1																						2	79					
Chestnut-sided Warbler	1																												1					
Blackpoll Warbler	1																												1					
Palm Warbler						3			1						1								1			1	1	8	8					
Pine Warbler								1													1						2	4	4					
Yellow-rumped Warbler													18		1							4	2	1		2	3	31	31					
Yellow-throated Warbler	4																												4					
Prairie Warbler	10												1															1	11					
Black-throated Gray Warbler	1																											1	2					
Black-throated Green Warbler	8				1			2					6	3			3	4		5		2	7				33	41						
Canada Warbler	49			2																								2	58					
Wilson's Warbler	94	2	1	4	5	2	1	10	4		3		6	4	4		2	3	1	2	3	4	5	1		2	2	71	165					
Yellow-breasted Chat	44			1														1	1									3	47					
Summer Tanager	4							1				1	2					1		1		1	1			1	9	13						
Scarlet Tanager	1					1										1	1											3	4					
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1							6			2		3															11	12					
Blue Grosbeak	55							1	2				2														1	6	61					
Indigo Bunting	22	1			2	1		18	4				10	1	4			2		2	2	2	5	5			1	58	81					
Painted Bunting	53	1			1				1						1													4	77					
Dickcissel	1																						1					1	2					
Orchard Oriole	37																												154					
Baltimore Oriole	74																							1				1	75					

Bird Sightings – December 2017

For this column, we review, looking for rare and very rare species, all credible eBird and other 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 Peninsula 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)

Commentary: As every December, the listing includes many sightings in the course of Christmas counts

One of the difficult decisions we make is deciding whether some species in the Big Thicket, especially the northern part, are rare enough to justify inclusion, but as eBird accumulates more and more records, we should be able to refine the process. In some cases, especially in nearby

Louisiana, some species are accorded "rare" status on eBird for reasons not strictly related to the actual rarity of the species, but because of identification difficulties. eBird does not have the ability to set a species to "rare" in areas smaller than whole counties. We have, however, ourselves done this on certain species that would be rare in Sabine Woods but reasonably expected on the norther fringes of the county near Pine Island Bayou. There are also isolated pockets of certain species in the county. The most obvious would be the Least Grebes at Cattail Marsh, but there is a need to verify if that small population has remained after spells of cold weather such as the one in early January this year.

In addition, we the definition of the area we cover has resulted in many species in which our local birders may be interested that are a little further east or west of our current definition. In January, we will start to include as an experiment, sightings in all of Harris, Galveston, and Chambers Counties and Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes.

Seen in our Core Counties (listed above)

Least Grebe	Dec 1-30-	JEF-TP (up to 1) HS et al
White-tailed Hawk	Dec 1	JEF-Big Hill Rd (1) JHH
	Dec 28	JEF-Old Sabine Cemetery (1) SH
Swainson's Hawk	Dec 28	JEF-Backridge Road (1) JHH
Chuck-will's-widow	Dec 19	JEF-SW (1) Howard Davis
Hairy Woodpecker	Dec 23	TYL-Campers Cove Picnic Area (1) MC, TH, JHH
Vermilion Flycatcher	Dec 18-23	HAI-Old Sour Lake Rd (2) John Mariani, SM (male+female)
	Dec 20	JEF-Backridge Rd (1) SH
	Dec 28	JEF-Backridge Rd (2) JHH et al
	Dec 28	JEF-Hwy 87 (1) Sea Rim CBC
Great Kiskadee	Dec 1-28	JEF-SW (1) JHH et al
Eastern Kingbird	Nov 29	JEF-McFaddin NWR (1) David Bell, Laura Wilson
Crested Caracara	Dec 18-26	HAI-Old Sour Lake Rd (1) JM, JAW, SH
Northern Waterthrush	Dec 28	CHA-Backridge Rd (1) JHH et al
Black-and-white Warbler	Dec 8	JEF-SW (1) JHH
	Dec 9	JEF-SW (1) SM
	Dec 13	JEF-SW (1) JHH
	Dec 28	JEF-SW (2) Sea Rim CBC
Nashville Warbler	Dec 28	JEF- Backridge Rd (1) JHH et al
Blue Grosbeak	Dec 8	JEF-SW (1) JHH (fem plumaged)
Rusty Blackbird	Dec 18	HAI-Old Sour Lake Rd (60) JM
Summer Tanager	Dec 30	ORA-Laura Lane (1) Denise Kelley (female plumaged)

Nearby Counties (very rare species only)

White-winged Scoter	Dec 10	CAM-off mouth of Calcasieu River (1) David Muth, Dave Patton (unconfirmed)
Golden Eagle	Dec 29	CHA-ANWR (unspecified location) (1) Robert and Bryce Hardway
Broad-winged Hawk	Dec 25	LIB-FM787 (prob nr. Romayor) (1) Erik Hendrickson
Swainson's Hawk	Dec 16	CAM-Second Bayou (1) Marty Floyd
Harris Hawk	Dec 8-22	GAL-Smith Oaks Rookery Area (1) Houston Audubon et al
Purple Gallinule	Dec 27	CHA-ANWR (unspecified location) (1) Paul Schmidt

	Dec 29	CHA-ANWR-Shoveler Pond (1) Bryce and Robert Hardway
Yellow Rail	Dec 1-2	CAM-E of Holly Beach (up to 2) (during banding project)
Black Rail	Dec 1	CAM-East of Holly Beach (2) (during banding project)
American Golden-Plover	Dec 15	CHA-ANWR-Visitor Center/Chenier Plain HQ (1) ANWR Visitors Unconfirmed – no details
Parasitic Jaeger	Dec 10	CAM-Off mouth of Calcasieu River (2 or more) David Muth, Paul Conover, Dave Patton
Glaucous Gull	Dec 23	CHA-Ash Lake/Cedar Bayou (1) Harvey Laas, Mike Austin, J. Berner. Gregory Page (1st yr bird)
Say's Phoebe	Dec 10	CHA-ANWR-Visitor Center/Chenier Plain HQ (1) ANWR Visitors
Great Kiskadee	Dec 17	CHA-Augusta St, Northpoint (2) Carl Poldrack
	Dec 29	CAL-Sam Houston Jones State Park (1) Tiom Nix
Black-and-white Warbler	Dec 9	CAL-Fabacher Rd (1) Lynn Hathaway and Marybeth Lima
American Redstart	CHA-ANWR-Visitor Center/Chenier Plain HQ (4) ANWR Visitors Unconfirmed – no details	
Summer Tanager	Dec 13	CAL-Moss Bluff (1) Billy Jones
Indigo Bunting	Dec 16	CAM-East Hackberry (1) Sabine NWR CBC (Dan Guillory, Irvin Louque)
Painted Bunting	Dec 14	CAM-Peverto Woods (1) Sheila Hebert (male)

Abbreviations used: ANG – Angelina County; ANWR – Anahuac NWR; BF – Bolivar Flats; BTNP – Big Thicket National Preserve; CAL – Calcasieu Parish; CAM – Cameron Parish; CHA – Chambers County; GAL – Galveston County; HAI – Hardin County; HS – Harlan Stewart; JAW – John Whittle; JEF – Jefferson County; JHH – John Haynes; JJW – Jana and John Whittle; JM – John Mariani; LIB – Liberty County; MC – Michael Cooper; NEDR – Nederland; ORA – Orange County; PI – Pleasure Is, Port Arthur; RL – Randy Lewis; SAB – Sabine County; SH – Sheila Hebert; SM – Steve Mayes, SRSP – Sea Rim State Park; SW – Sabine Woods; TH – Thomas Hellweg; TP – Tyrrell Park including Cattail Marsh; TXPT – Texas Point NWR; TYL – Tyler County; 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. 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>.