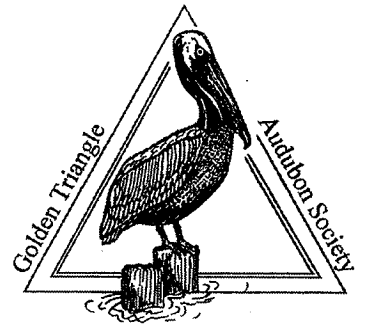


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 26 No. 1

January 2020

Membership Meeting
Thursday January 16, 2020 7:00 p.m.
Hillcrest Baptist Church
3324 Park Drive, Nederland, Texas
See page 2 for driving directions

Native Grass Restoration at
Connemara Meadow Nature Preserve

Bob Mione, Preserve Manager

The Connemara Meadow Nature Preserve is on the border of Allen and Plan, north of Dallas. Open to the public daily from dawn until dusk, the Meadow represents 72 acres of natural habitat, rich in floral diversity that is reminiscent of the tall grass Blackland Prairie that once existed in the area.

This family land was set aside by Frances Williams in 1981 so that residents would be able to experience the unspoiled beauty of nature forever. It is owned and perpetually maintained by the Connemara Conservancy Foundation.

Bob Mione has served as the Connemara Meadow Nature Preserve Manager since 2010 and as such has been primarily responsible for all restoration activities at the Meadow, to include planning, budgeting, volunteer recruitment and management. He speaks throughout the State of Texas on the topic of restoration at various Master Naturalist and Native Plant Society chapters and was a speaker at the State of Texas Master Naturalist statewide convention in 2016 and 2019. He finished his State of Texas Master Naturalist training in 2012 and is an active member of the Blackland Prairie Chapter.

We will briefly review the results of local Christmas Bird Counts.
We plan to have the doors open at 6:00 p.m.

The Brown Pelican

Vol. 26, No. 1 January 2020
Issue number 258

Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Web Site for more information
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. 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 gtaudubon@aol.com.

Thursday January 16, 2020. Membership Meeting. Program on the Blackland Prairie grasses by Bob Mione of Connemara Conservancy.

Directions to Hillcrest Baptist Church, our meeting location this month.

From Beaumont and the north

Take US69/96/287 south out of Beaumont to the FM365 exit, keeping left on the feeder road. Take the turnaround lane under the freeway and head back north moving to the right hand lane of the feeder road. In about 1500 feet (1/4 mile), turn right on Park Avenue (just before Carmela's restaurant) and proceed 1200 feet (2/10 mile) to the church parking lot on the left, opposite the Babe Ruth Ball Park. Enter the Gathering Hall through the door on the circular drive on Park Avenue.

From the south

Leave northbound US69/96/287 at the FM365 exit, moving to the right lane and proceeding straight across FM365. Turn right on Park Avenue and follow the remainder of the directions above.

Refreshments

We thank the Beaumont Convention and Visitors Bureau for providing refreshments for this meeting.

Saturday January 18, 2020. 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 **MAIN** Anahuac NWR Entrance Road on the left (south). As you drive along FM1985, check any cowbird/blackbird flocks carefully for Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

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 along the entrance road for Crested Caracaras, and nearer the entrance to the refuge on the east side for White-tailed Kites.

We will probably visit both the main unit ("Old Anahuac") and the Skillern Tract, looking primarily for waterfowl and other waterbirds but also raptors and sparrows. We may also bird some of the local rice field areas.

There are usually geese and Bald Eagles on the refuge in winter. A Vermilion Flycatcher winters near the Visitor Station. Say's Phoebe and Cinnamon Teal are possibilities.

While it is not anticipated that this field trip will necessitate extensive walking, it is a 400 yard (1/4 mile) walk from the Skillern Tract parking area to the observation platform. All roads that we will use will be easily passable in ordinary vehicles. However, car-pooling is very desirable, especially for the drive round Shoveler Pond because the road is one-car wide and there are only a few pull-offs most of which will accommodate only three or four cars. There is space to leave vehicles close to the meeting place.



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

Thursday February 20, 2020. Membership Meeting. David Bradford on birds of southeast Arizona.

Saturday February 22, 2020 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. At that point, you are close to half way round.** 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.

Continue ahead and proceed about two-thirds of the way round the main loop and into the well-marked Cattail Marsh parking area.

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 and as above.

Summer Birding on Tram Road

It was during the spring migration count of 2018 that Dr. Whittle and I first found the chats on Tram Road in the northernmost part of Jefferson County. At first there was one, perched on the top of a young pine on a small pine plantation. But we quickly saw, and heard, more. Probably at least a half-dozen undoubtedly breeding. I wondered if Prairie Warblers might follow them sometime.

They became what I call Tram Road #1, #2 and #3 the three pieces of property, all less than a mile south of Pine Island Bayou, that were clear cut sometime between 2011 and 2013. By May of 2018 the young pines were an estimated seven to nine years old. I began on May 27th and counted the properties weekly until August 5th. Peak was Sunday June 17th with a total of 19 Yellow-breasted Chat, by the beginning of August they were gone.

In May of 2019 I decided to resume my chat counts after the end of the school year. On the 26th there were 14 and the next week on June 2nd 19 Yellow-breasted Chats on all properties. But that Sunday count day also brought a surprise: a calling Prairie Warbler at Tram Road # 1. So faint at first that I thought I might have imagined it. I stopped and listened and there was no doubt this was the ascending reedy call. Three, maybe four. But would they stay? Evidently not. I never heard them again. But there were still breeding Yellow-breasted Chats, Painted Buntings, Indigo Buntings and White-eyed Vireos. And in the woods north of the property you could hear Hooded Warblers, Summer Tanagers, Great-crested Flycatchers and Yellow-billed Cuckoos. Perhaps this year the Prairie Warblers will be among them.

Species list for Tram Road # 1:

Wood Duck, Mottled Duck, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Killdeer, Great Egret, Little Blue Heron, Cattle Egret, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Black Vulture, Turkey Vulture, Mississippi Kite, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Pileated Woodpecker, Great-crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, White-eyed Vireo,

Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Fish Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Purple Martin, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Barn Swallow, Tree Swallow, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Carolina Wren, Brown Thrasher, Northern Mockingbird, Yellow-breasted Chat, Brown-headed Cowbird, Common Grackle, Hooded Warbler, Pine Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Summer Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Painted Bunting.

Sheila Hebert

Membership Dues

To simplify our record keeping, all memberships now run from January through December. Membership dues are \$20 per year. We are now accepting 2020 dues. You may pay at any membership meeting (checks preferred) or use the subscription/ membership blank on the back page.

Dues are voluntary for National Audubon Society (NAS) members living in the Chapter's official territory, which basically covers all of Jefferson, Orange and Hardin Counties and one or two zip codes adjacent to these counties. All such NAS members automatically receive the *Brown Pelican* each month without further payment, although we do request a donation of \$20 per year if you are able.

Dues for all members will be for the period ending on December 31. For new members joining National Audubon on line and selecting our Chapter code (W25), we receive a rebate of the entire first year's national dues, and no Chapter dues are expected for that first year.

Electronic Delivery of the *Brown Pelican*

We currently mail most copies of the *Brown Pelican* to members by first class mail. While we certainly do not want to cut off any members who are unable to receive a copy electronically, we encourage you to receive your copy as a pdf attachment to an email. This way, you can save us both expense and volunteer time. To do this please send an email to gtaudubon@aol.com from the address you want us to use. Be sure to include your name so we can find you in our membership records!

Sea Rim State Park Christmas Count -- 17 December 2019

After having to cancel last year's count, it is a little disappointing and concerning to have access and weather issues again this year. The provisional total number of species is 131, well below normal for the count, no doubt caused in part by these issues.

First of all, however, let me emphasize that we were not denied permission to access any area in the circle that we asked. Because of the beginning of construction of the infrastructure for the Port Arthur (Sempra) LNG facility on Highway 87 north of Keith Lake, land access to the J.D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area is essentially not possible. Access by boat is possible, but we had no boats at our disposal. Tropical Storm Imelda in September substantially affected the shoreline from Texas Point westward. A new deep cut developed from the interior of the Texas Point marsh to the Gulf just about a mile east of the road to Sea Rim Estates, preventing access to the roughly five miles of shoreline east of that. Access along the shoreline to the west is hindered by the remains of some structures that were a couple of hundred feet inland before Imelda.

In addition to these access issues, the weather was very unfavorable. After two or three days of nice warm weather, a cold front came through during the night, leaving winds of 20-25 mph and temperatures in the low forties. The birds had been able to easily feed in the days before, and did not need to venture out of wherever they were sheltering from the cold wind, to say nothing of the difficulties the observers had in dealing with the conditions!

As was inevitable in the circumstances, the count was short on waterfowl species. The ducks were mostly hiding in the marshes. There is some evidence that duck numbers are lower along the entire coast so far this winter. A Chuck-will's-widow at Sabine Woods was nice. It seems that one is spending at least the first part of the winter in the area with increasing frequency. The conditions made finding rails difficult, resulting in finding two species instead of the usual four. The plovers and sandpipers were close to normal in terms of species, although finding only two Snowy Plovers was the lowest in many years. The days of the Sea Rim beach being well supplied with them seem to be over.

Gulls and terns were in normal numbers, with the two Common Terns perhaps worthy of note. This species becomes quite difficult to find in our area after December, so perhaps we have been just a little too late in recent year's counts. Herons were pretty much normal except for the first Cattle Egrets (by two parties) in the past seven counts. Eighteen Ospreys was a new all-time high for the count. White-tailed Hawks are becoming established in Jefferson County and an immature bird represented the fourth count in a row for the species. We missed Northern Flicker for the first time since 1997. Seventeen Crested Caracaras more than doubled the previous high and the species is now firmly established locally. American Kestrels at seven was the lowest in the history of the count. This is disturbing, and the species has been of concern in areas further north in the United States. This the situation deserves watching!

Encouraging was the bounce back in numbers of Loggerhead Shrike at 35 after a poor showing of 29 in 2017,

especially as the wind probably affected us finding them. Not only was this not a year with any irruptions – no Purple Finches in our area, no Red-breasted Nuthatches, and in the case of this count, not even any American Goldfinches for the first time ever. We perhaps had better be cautious in our analysis as the Goldfinches in the past were often found in areas not able to be covered this time. The timing of our annual American Robin invasion varies and can be as late as February, so not finding them on this count is not unprecedented. Finding wintering Wilson's Warblers on the coast is hit and miss, and it was nice to find some this year.

All in all, a disappointing number of species but probably a reasonable assessment of the areas that were accessible.

Participants: Michael Cooper, Howard Davis, Ashley Fuselier, Craig Geoffroy, Sherry Gibson, Stephanie Goering, John Haynes, Thomas Hellweg, Gary Kelley, Art MacKinnon, Karen McCormick, Sherrie Roden, Jenny Shuffield, Monique Slaughter, Christine Sliva, Harlan Stewart, Jana and John Whittle

Species recorded: GOOSE, Snow (636); GOOSE, Ross's (3); GOOSE, Greater White-fronted (16); TEAL, Blue-winged (30); SHOVELER, Northern (464); GADWALL (542); DUCK, Mottled (5); PINTAIL, Northern (50); TEAL, Green-winged (16); DUCK, Ring-necked (2); SCAUP, Lesser (224); SCAUP, Species (70); MERGANSER, Hooded (13); MERGANSER, Red-breasted (21); DUCK, Ruddy (200); GREBE, Pied-billed (40); PIGEON, Rock (51); COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian (2); DOVE, White-winged (4); DOVE, Mourning (25); WILL'S-WIDOW, Chuck (1); RAIL, Clapper (2); SORA (2); GALLINULE, Common (17); COOT, American (1114); RAIL, species (1); STILT, Black-necked (95); AVOCET, American (234); OYSTERCATCHER, American (2); PLOVER, Black-bellied (29); KILL-DEER (163); PLOVER, Semipalmated (37); PLOVER, Piping (7); PLOVER, Snowy (2); CURLEW, Long-billed (2); GODWIT, Marbled (21); SANDERLING (33); DUNLIN (209); SANDPIPER, Least (28); SANDPIPER, Western (96); DOWITCHER, Long-billed (14); DOWITCHER, species (13); SNIPE, Wilson's (5); SANDPIPER, Spotted (1); YELLOWLEGS, Greater (5); WILLET (26); YELLOWLEGS, Lesser (5); GULL, Laughing (400); GULL, Ring-billed (103); GULL, Herring (29); TERN, Caspian (4); TERN, Common (2); TERN, Forster's (134); TERN, Royal (32); SKIMMER, Black (30); LOON, Common (1); ANHINGA (20); CORMORANT, Neotropical (172); CORMORANT, Double-crested (59); CORMORANT species (39); PELICAN, American White (592); PELICAN, Brown (134); HERON, Great Blue (59); EGRET, Great (85); EGRET, Snowy (84); HERON, Little Blue (11); HERON, Tricolored (18); EGRET, Cattle (17); HERON, Green (1); NIGHT-HERON, Black-crowned (1); IBIS, White (763); IBIS, White-faced (24); IBIS, Plegadis species (97); SPOONBILL, Roseate (32); VULTURE, Black (33); VULTURE, Turkey (23); OSPREY (18); KITE, White-tailed (10); HARRIER, Northern (31); HAWK, Sharp-shinned (2); HAWK, Cooper's (2); HAWK, White-tailed (1); HAWK, Red-tailed (38); OWL, Barn (1); OWL, Great Horned (3); KINGFISHER, Belted (15); SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied (4); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (1); WOODPECKER, Downy (5); CARACARA, Crested (17); KESTREL, American (7); MERLIN (3); FALCON, Peregrine (4); FLYCATCHER, Least (1); PHOEBE, Eastern (21); FLYCATCHER, Least (1); FLYCATCHER, Vermilion (4); SHRIKE, Loggerhead (35); VIREO, Blue-headed (4); JAY, Blue (10); SWALLOW, Tree (24); SWALLOW, N. Rough-winged (8); SWALLOW, Barn (6); WREN, House (9); WREN, Winter (0); WREN, Sedge (12); WREN, Marsh (5); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (22); KINGLET, Golden-crowned (12); KINGLET, Ruby-crowned (38); THRUSH, Hermit (3); THRUSH, Wood (1); CATBIRD, Gray (5); THRASHER, Brown (2); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (18); STARLING, European (282); SPARROW, White-crowned (1); SPARROW, White-throated (39); SPARROW, LeConte's (1); SPARROW, Nelson's (cw); SPARROW, Savannah (45); SPARROW, Song (3); SPARROW, Lincoln's (3); SPARROW, Swamp (22); MEADOWLARK, Eastern (2); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (719); GRACKLE, Common (58); GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (188); GRACKLE, Great-tailed (114); GRACKLE, species (77); WARBLER, Orange-crowned (31); YELLOWTHROAT, Common (10); WARBLER, Palm (1); WARBLER, Pine (5); WARBLER, Yellow-rumped (85); WARBLER, Wilson's (3); COWBIRD, Brown-headed (42); CARDINAL, Northern (4); BUNTING, Indigo (1); SPECIES, total (131); INDIVIDUALS, total (9762). *John A. Whittle*

Turkey Creek Christmas Bird Count December 21, 2019

The fact that there were exactly the same number of species counted by this year's volunteers for the Turkey Creek Christmas Bird as last is in no way indicative of an unsuccessful count. Sixty-five species identified is about an average count.

What did go up was the number of individuals counted. Almost 700. After a dramatic drop in 2014 of almost 2000 birds, the numbers have increased slowly since 2016 from 2348 to 3637 this year. Hopefully this trend will continue.

Missing from the count were Northern Harriers, Eastern Screech Owls, Loggerhead Shrikes and Brown Creepers though they are never present in great numbers. There were more Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and Blue Jays. It was nice to see Chipping Sparrows back up to more normal numbers after several low years. European Starlings are all but disappearing in the count circle and for some birders that may not be such a terrible thing. However, the count lost its House Sparrow-free status for the first time in a number of years.

Participants: Kathleen and Lisa Appelbaum, David Bell, Michael Cooper, Sherry Gibson, Sheila Hebert, Thomas Hellweg, Steve Mayes, Sherrie Roden, Christine Sliva, John Smelser, Wanda and Charles Smith, Harlan Stewart, Jana and John Whittle

Species recorded: WHISTLING-DUCK, Black-bellied (0); DUCK, Wood (20); DUCK, Ring-necked (43); GREBE, Pied-billed (7); COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian (9); DOVE, Inca (1); DOVE, Mourning (11); KILLDEER (14); WOODCOCK, American (4); CORMORANT, Double-crested (2); PELICAN, American White (1); HERON, Great Blue (5); EGRET, Great (6); VULTURE, Black (117); VULTURE, Turkey (84); HAWK, Sharp-shinned (1); ACCIPITER, [species] (1); HAWK, Red-shouldered (7); HAWK, Red-tailed (5); OWL, Barred (1); OWL, [species] (1); KINGFISHER, Belted (4); SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied (37); WOODPECKER, Red-headed (5); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (68); WOODPECKER, Downy (15); WOODPECKER, Hairy (3); WOODPECKER, Pileated (17); FLICKER, Northern (12); KESTREL, American (5); PHOEBE, Eastern (31); VIREO, White-eyed (6); VIREO, Blue-headed (19); JAY, Blue (82); CROW, American (157); CROW species (2); CHICKADEE, Carolina (68); TITMOUSE, Tufted (38); NUTHATCH, Brown-headed (24); WREN, House (17); WREN, Winter (2); WREN, Sedge (9); WREN, Carolina (41); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (8); KINGLET, Golden-crowned (7); KINGLET, Ruby-crowned (85); BLUEBIRD, Eastern (58); THRUSH, Hermit (18); ROBIN, American (1954); CATBIRD, Gray (17); THRASHER, Brown (3); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (14); WAXWING, Cedar (121); GOLDFINCH, American (155); SPARROW, Chipping (114); SPARROW, Field (1); SPARROW, White-crowned (1); SPARROW, White-throated (59); SPARROW, Savannah (5); SPARROW, Song (6); SPARROW, Swamp (10); TOWHEE, Eastern (4); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (17); WARBLER, Orange-crowned (32); WARBLER, Pine (112); WARBLER, Yellow-rumped (205); CARDINAL, Northern (46); SPARROW, House (15); SPECIES, total (65); INDIVIDUALS, total (3639); Number of observers (16); Number of parties (7); Party-hours on foot (20.5); Party-miles on foot (14.7); Party-hours by car (29.6); Party-miles by car (125.0); Party-hours stationary (2.8); Total Party hours (52.8); Total Party miles (139.7).

Sheila Hebert

Beech Creek Christmas Bird Count December 28, 2019

After it was all said and done there was only one 'write-up bird' found during this year's Beech Creek Christmas Bird Count: a White-winged Dove, the second found in the last nine years.

The seventy-seven species counted was down from the average of about 85 on this count. Some duck species were missing--there were no Hooded Merganser or Ruddy Duck--and Canvasback numbers were way down from last year. Also missing were Eastern Towhees, American Goldfinch, American Woodcock, and Ring-billed Gulls. No Snow Goose were seen or heard flying over and no Ring-billed Gulls were spotted in the lake area. There was only one Brown Creeper reported.

But on the bright side a Merlin was reported, the first since 2014.

Participants: Leigh Baker, Michael Cooper, Sherry Gibson, Sheila Hebert, Thomas Hellweg, Phillip Hight, Fred Lyons, Debbie McMullen, Sherrie Roden, Wanda and Charles Smith, Jana and John John Whittle, Erik Wolf

Species recorded: DUCK, Wood (3); CANVASBACK (77); DUCK, Ring-necked (11); SCAUP, Lesser (1); GREBE, Pied-billed (10); COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian (6); DOVE, White-winged (1); DOVE, Mourning (22); GALLINULE, Common (8); COOT, American (225); KILLDEER (50); SANDPIPER, Spotted (4); TERN, Forster's (32); ANHINGA (6); CORMORANT, Double-crested (270); CORMORANT, [species] (5); HERON, Great Blue (7); EGRET, Great (31); EGRET, Snowy (7); HERON, Little Blue (6); HERON, Tricolored (1); VULTURE, Black (56); VULTURE, Turkey (54); HAWK, Sharp-shinned (1); EAGLE, Bald (11); HAWK, Red-shouldered (2); HAWK, Red-tailed (4); SCREECH-OWL, Eastern (1); OWL, Barred (2); KINGFISHER, Belted (7); SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied (16); WOODPECKER, Red-headed (2); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (36); WOODPECKER, Downy (21); WOODPECKER, Hairy (4); WOODPECKER, Pileated (27); FLICKER, Northern (11); KESTREL, American (3); MERLIN (1); PHOEBE, Eastern (38); SHRIKE, Loggerhead (1); VIREO, White-eyed (2); VIREO, Blue-headed (4); JAY, Blue (61); CROW, American (82); SWALLOW, [species] (2); CHICKADEE, Carolina (59); TITMOUSE, Tufted (34); NUTHATCH, Brown-headed (1); CREEPER, Brown (2); WREN, House (7); WREN, Winter (3); WREN, Carolina (32); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (15); KINGLET, Golden-crowned (5); KINGLET, Ruby-crowned (56); BLUEBIRD, Eastern (26); THRUSH, Hermit (4); ROBIN, American (860); CATBIRD, Gray (9); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (11); STARLING, European (17); WAXWING, Cedar (288); GOLDFINCH, American (256); SPARROW, Chipping (163); JUNCO, Dark-eyed (14); SPARROW, White-throated (21); SPARROW, Savannah (1); SPARROW, Song (11); SPARROW, Lincoln's (4); SPARROW, Swamp (4); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (225); GRACKLE, Common (12); GRACKLE, Great-tailed (60); WARBLER, Orange-crowned (18); YELLOWTHROAT, Common (3); WARBLER, Pine (51); WARBLER, Yellow-rumped (236); CARDINAL, Northern (84); SPARROW, House (10); SPECIES, total (78); Number of Individuals (3834); Number of observers (14); Parties (5); Party-hours on foot (15.10); Party-miles on foot (10.40); Party-hours by car (29.62); Party-miles by car (96.40); Party-hours total (44.72); Party-miles total (106.80)

Sheila Hebert

Bird Sightings – December 2019

For this column, we review, looking for rare and very rare species, all credible eBird and other records reported to us from nearby Texas counties – Angelina, Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, Newton, Orange, Sabine, San Augustine and Tyler. We also review records for Chambers, Galveston, Harris and Liberty Counties in Texas, and Calcasieu and Cameron Parishes in Louisiana.

The format of the listing is Species – Date – County-and brief location information if available – (number) – Observer(s). If more precise location information is needed, it can often be obtained by using the bird species map feature to find the sighting in eBird, opening the checklist, and using the map function to display the location as precisely as the observer provided.

Commentary: December always brings with it the rarities found during most of the Christmas Bird Counts. Standing out among these are 15 species of warbler, many seen in multiple locations. There are always a few "lingering" warblers, and many Christmas Counts are scheduled early in the period to

try to find them. Prairie and Yellow-throated Warblers are found wintering more often than many of the others. Louisiana Waterthrush is among the most unusual. Black-throated Gray Warbler is rare in the area any time, although often found in winter in the Rio Grande Valley.

The Common Ground Dove invasion continued. The species is not migratory, so it is likely that this fall's birds represent either post-breeding dispersal or perhaps range expansion as a result of increased populations.

Although there are scoter records below, it seems that there are fewer than last year.

Least Bitterns are perhaps becoming the next candidate for more frequent lingering or even wintering.

We are close to concluding that Brown Boobies are established as year round residents along the Gulf coast and the larger bays. The checklists we use to determine what is rare and what is not are updated only infrequently, so we will have to make our own decisions to avoid these pages overflowing more than they already are.

Seen in our Core Counties (listed above)

Western Grebe	Dec 7	JEF-McFaddin NWR (1) Conner England
Chuck-will's-Widow	Dec 23	JEF-SW (1) Howard Davis
Yellow Rail	Dec 7	JEF-McFaddin NWR (1) Conner England
American Woodcock	Dec 8	JEF-Hamshire (1) Christine Sliva
Brown Booby	Nov 26	JEF-SRSP (2) Steve Dougill
	Dec22	JEF-TP (1) TH
Least Bittern	Dec 7	JEF-McFaddin NWR (1) Conner England
Western Kingbird	Dec 3	JEF-Thompson Rd (1) JAW
	Dec 14	JEF-Hwy 87 nr Old Cemetery (1) SM
Barn Swallow	Dec 17	JEF-SRSP Willows (1) Art MacKinnon
Western Bluebird	Dec 13	JEF-Beaumont (1) SH (unconf)
Wood Thrush	Dec 7	JAS-Rd to Ebenezer Park (1) Phillip Hight
Clay-colored Sparrow	Dec26	JEF-Edgewater Picnic Area (1) James Barnes
Northern Waterthrush	Dec 4	JEF-TP (1) JHH
Nashville Warbler	Nov 28	JEF-SW (1) Steve Dougill
Summer Tanager	Nov 28	JEF-SW (1) Steve Dougill
	Dec 3	ANG-Lufkin (1) Gary Hunter
	Dec 12	ANG-SE Lufkin (1) Donna Beck

Nearby Counties

Fulvous Whistling-Duck	Dec 14	CAM-Lt. Chenier Rd (11) Brittany Maldonado, Erik Johnson
White-winged Scoter	Dec 14	CAM-LA82 east of Johnson Bayou
Black Scoter	Dec 15	CAM-Holly Beach (1) Joan Garvey
	Dec 28	CHA-NRG Cooling Ponds (1) D. Sarkozi, C. Davis, D. Hanson
Western Grebe	Dec 14, 30	HAS-Hog Is area (1) Mike Austin, Judy Behrens, mult obs

Common Ground Dove

	Dec 8	HAS-Paul Rushing Park (3) Greg Page
	Dec 14	GAL-13-mile beach (2) Greg Whittaker
	Dec 25	GAL-Friendswood (1) Greg Hall
	Dec 26	HAS-Sharp Rd (1) Stuart Nelson, Chris Hammond
	Dec 31	HAS-Warren Ranch (4) Stuart Nelson, James Riemann
Groove-billed Ani	Dec 21	CAL-Tom Hebert Rd (1) Erik Johnson
Common Nighthawk	Dec 11	HAS-Terry Hershey Park (1) Karl Poetzl

Chuck-will's-widow	Dec 8	CAM-Willow Is (1) PC, DP, PW
Eastern Whip-poor-will	Dec 7-8	CAM-Willow Is (1) PC, DP, PW
	Dec 14	CAM-Oak Grove Sanct (1) DM, PC, mult obs
Semi-palm. Sandpiper	Dec 28	GAL-Texas City Dike (1) Ted Keyel
Parasitic Jaeger	Dec 7	CAM-Offshore from Calcasieu River (1) PC, DP, PW
Franklin's Gull	Dec 17	HAS-Channelview (1) Timothy Freiday
	Dec 28	GAL-Texas City Dike (1) Fred Collins
	Dec 30	HAS-Ship Channel W shore (1) mult obs
Iceland (Thayer's) Gull	Dec 30	HAS-Ash Lake (1) Chris Hammond, mult obs
Glaucous Gull	Dec10	GAL-Texas City Dike (1) Brian Berry
Common Tern	Dec 30	HAS-Hog Is (2) Tim Perkins, mult obs
Black Skimmer	Dec 28	CAL-Intracoastal Park (71) Melissa Simon and John Garrett
Wood Stork	Dec 8	HAS-Warren Ranch Lake area (1) Todd McGrath

Brown Booby

	Nov 30	GAL-Texas City Dike (1) multi obs
	Dec 2	GAL-Texas City Dike (1) Richard Ray
	Dec 13	GAL-West Bay N of Sportsman's Rd (1) Dean Silvers
	Dec 3-15	HAS-Baytown NC (4) mult obs
	Dec 14	HAS-Thompson's Bait Camp (1) Letha Slaigle

Least Bittern

	Dec 7	CHA-ANWR Hackberry Trl. (1) Tim. Freiday, Iliana Mock
	Dec 8	CHA ANWR (1) Laurie Sines
	Dec 19	CHA-ANWR East Unit (Restricted Access) (1) Sherrie Roden, JJW, Harlan Stewart
	Dec 28	CAL-Global Pond (1) Melissa Simon and John Garrett
Golden Eagle	Dec 28	CHA-Anahuac-Frozen Pt Rd (1) Ronald Hall (no details)
Swainson's Hawk	Dec 4	CHA-FM1985 (1) Robin Gray
Zone-tailed Hawk	Dec 8	HAS-Warren Ranch area (1) Bob and Maggie Honig, mult obs
Say's Phoebe	Dec 7-20	CAM-Rockefeller SWR (1) Katie Barnes, Richard Temple, mult obs
	Dec 8-14	CAM-Willow Is (1) PC, DP, PW, mult obs
	Dec 7-29	HAS-El Franco Lee Park (1) Marie Asscherick
Ash-throated Flycatcher	Dec 8	CAM-Willow Is (1) PC

Gt. Crested Flycatcher Dec 14 CAM-Creole- Trosclair Rd (1) PC, DM, PW, mult obs

Couch's Kingbird

Dec 1 CHA-ANWR-Jackson Woodlot, John Parkeroodlot (1) Carl Poldrack
Dec 2-5 LIB-Liberty (1) Colette and Paul Micallef, mult obs
Dec 11 GAL-Corps Woods (1) Kris Cannon
Dec 11-19 GAL-Lake Friendswood Park (2) Steve Rogow, mult obs
Dec 11 GAL-Stewart Rd nr. 7 mi Rd (1) Greg Whittaker
Western Kingbird Dec 28 GAL-13 mi Rd (1) Sally Pachulski
Philadelphia Vireo Dec 29 CHA-Shoveler Pond Boardwalk (1) "Anonymous eBirder"
Red-eyed Vireo Dec 17 GAL-Broadway (1) Scott Buckel
Chihuahuan Raven Nov 30 GAL-Lago Mar (1) Allen Hardee
Barn Swallow Dec 1 HAS-Paul Rushing Park (1) John Cocanower (1)
Bewick's Wren Dec 18 HAS-Sharp Road (1) Leetha Slaigle
Dec 19,31 HAS-Longenbaugh Rd. (1) Chris Hammond, Jim Hinson, mult obs
Swainson's Thrush Dec 19 LIB-Trinity River NWR Butler Unit (1) Sydney Fitzpatrick
Wood Thrush Dec 1 HAS-Memorial (1) Sue Orwig (continuing)
Dec 8-14 CAM-Willow Is (1)PC, DP, PW, M. Meunier, Joan Garvey
European Goldfinch Dec 2 HAS-Bear Creek Park (1) Jim Highburger
Clay-colored Sparrow Dec 29 HAS-George Bush Park (1) Kevin Smith
Henslow's Sparrow Dec 19, 23 LIB-Kenefick (2) Colette Micallef
Dec 27, 29 HAS-George Bush Park (1) Bob Sanger
Yellow-headed Blackbird Dec 19, 27 CHA-FM1985 (1) David Sarkozi, mult obs

Western Meadowlark

Dec 5,16 HAS-George Bush Park Central (10) Letha Slaigle, Sonny Bratz
Dec 9 HAS-Warren Ranch Lake area (1) J. Berner
Dec 20 CAM-Hwy 717 and PR119 (1) Van Remsen
Dec 20 CAM-Bell City Welch Rd (1) Paul Conover
Orchard Oriole Dec 16 GAL-High Is (1) Marion Barlow

Bullock's Oriole

Dec 6 HAS-Provident Oaks (1) Stephen Gast
Dec 7 HAS-Baytown (1) Gene Campbell
Dec 9 CHA-Double Bayou (Poncho St) (1) Kristi Savage
Dec 28 CHA-Wallisville-Turtle Bayou Rd (1) Bonnie de Groot, Cathy Hay, Michelle Romydy
Ovenbird Dec 1 GAL-Friendswood (1) Dawn Hailey
Dec 13 HAS-Armand Bayou NC (1) Farah Jamalaria
Worm-eating Warbler Dec 6 HAS-Challenger 7 Park (1) Robin Gray
Northern Waterthrush Dec 14 CAM-Oak Grove-S Cameron HS (1) Dan Mooney, Paul Schaub
Dec 21 CAM-Calcasieu River Road (1) Robert Dobbs
Louisiana Waterthrush Nov 30 HAS-Exploration Green (1) Danny Lynch)

Black-and-white Warbler

Dec 7, 14 CAM-Willow Is (1) PC, PW, Mark Meunier, Joan Garvey
Dec 14 CAM-Trosclair Rd (1) PC, DM, PW, Gary Broussard, John Parker
Dec 21 CAM-Bell City-PR 442 (Paul Conover
Dec 28 CAL-Intracoastal Park (1) Melissa Simon and John Garrett
Dec 28 LIB-Old River-Winfree (1) Gary Holmes
Tennessee Warbler Dec 1 HAS-Randolph Park (1) Brad Lirette
Dec 28 CHA-IH10-Wallisville (1) Carl Poldrack, Marvin Masters

Nashville Warbler

Nov 6-23 LIB-FM1008 area N of Kenefick (1) Colette and Paul Micallef
Dec 16-19 HAS-Rice Univ (1) Cin-Ty Lee

Dec 28 HAS-Terry Hershey Park (1) Lauren Miheli, Timothy While
Hooded Warbler Dec 14 CAM-Oak Grove Sanctuary (1) PC, DM, John Parker
Northern Parula Dec 22 HAS-Bay Area Pk (1) Lihua Feng
Magnolia Warbler Dec 1 HAS-San Jacinto Battleground (1) D. Le Croisette, James Rieman
Dec 2 CHA-ANWR Skillern (1) Timothy Freiday
Yellow Warbler Dec 21-22 GAL-Bacliff-Bayside Regional Park (1) Liz Garney, John Faber
Dec 28 CAL-Intracoastal Park (1) Melissa Simon and John Garrett
Y-r.(Audubon's) Warb. Dec1 LIB-Texaco Rd (1) Colette and Paul Micallef
Dec 4 HAS-Bear Creek Park (1) John Berner
Dec 21 HAS-nr. Armand Bayou (1) Gemini Twins
Yellow-throated Warbler Dec 5 CAL-Lake Charles (1) Paul Zimmermann
Dec 21-28 CAL-Lake Charles –nr. IH210 and Nelson Rd (1) Melissa Simon, mult obs

Prairie Warbler

Dec 4 CAM-Lacassine NWR Pool (1) John Pratt
Dec 12 GAL-Artist Boat Coastal Preserve (1) Greg Hall
Dec 14 CAM-Trosclair Rd (1) Gary Broussard, John Parker
Dec 21 CAL-LA397 (1) Erik Johnson
Dec 21 CAM-Calcasieu River Road (1) Robert Dobbs
Dec 24 HAS-Baytown nr. 146 and 330 (1) Gene Campbell
Dec 31 HAS-Longenbaugh Rd (1) Stuart Nelson, Jim Hinson
Black-thr. Gray Warbler Dec 7 HAS-Copperfield Area (1) Tim Hebert
Black-thr. Green Warbler Dec 4, 16 HAS-Rice Univ (1) Cin-Ty Lee
Dec 21 CAM-Bell City-PR 442 (Paul Conover
Summer Tanager Dec 26 CAL-French Settlement (1 male) Beth Cramer

Western Tanager

Dec 14-18 GAL-Lake Friendswood (1) Joe Fischer
Dec 14 CAM-Trosclair Rd (1) PC, DM, PW, Gary Broussard, John Parker
Dec 24 HAS-Archbishop Fiorenza Park (1) Mary Goldsby, Mary Ann Weber, Susan Kennedy
Rose-breast. Grosbeak Dec 1 HAS-San Jacinto Battleground (1 fem) Dominic Le Croisette, James Rieman
Dec 15 CAM-Mermentau Bridge area (1) Donald Norman

Black-headed Grosbeak

Dec 8 HAS-White Oak Park (1) Susan Kennedy, Wendy Wright
Dec 14 CAM- Little Chenier Rd (1) Brittany Maldonado, Erik Johnson
Dec 16 HAS-Houston Botanic Gdn (1) Mary Anne Weber
Blue Grosbeak Dec 6 CAM-Sabine NWR Wetland Walkway (1) John Pratt
Painted Bunting Dec 8 HAS-Piney Point (1 ad male) Ben Hulsey
Dickcissel Dec 1 CHA-Fairview Rd (1) Carl Poldrack

Abbreviations used: ANG – Angelina County; ANWR – Anahuac NWR; BF – Bolivar Flats; CAL – Calcasieu Parish; CAM – Cameron Parish; CHA – Chambers County; DM – David Muth; DP—Dave Patton; GAL – Galveston County; HAI – Hardin County; HAS – Harris County; HI – High Island; HS – Harlan Stewart; JAS – Jasper County; JAW – John Whittle; JEF – Jefferson County; JHH – John Haynes; JJW – Jana and John Whittle; LIB – Liberty County; MC – Michael Cooper; NEW – Newton County; ORA – Orange County; PC – Paul Conover; PI – Pleasure Is, Port Arthur;; PW – Phillip Wallace; SAA – San Augustine Co.; SAB – Sabine County; SH – Sheila Hebert; SM – Steve Mayes, SRSP – Sea Rim State Park; SW – Sabine Woods; TP – Tyrrell Park including Cattail Marsh; TYL – Tyler County; WJC – West Jefferson County.

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

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Many rare bird sightings in Texas are posted on Facebook Texbirds or on the TEXTBIRDS listserv. Archives of the listserv are at www.freelists.org/archive/texbirds. It is not necessary to subscribe to view the archives, which include all recent postings.

Detailed information/maps on birding sites in Texas is available on the Web at <http://www.texasbirds.org/birdingLocations.php>. This leads you to the maps of the various eBird hotspots. You can also subscribe (free) on eBird for email alerts for all rare birds reported in a specific county.