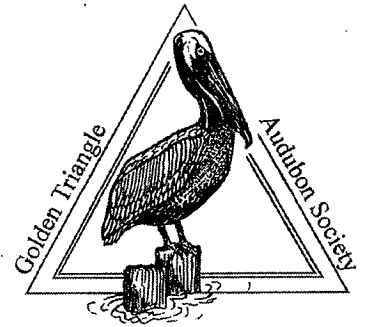


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 26 No. 3

March 2020

Membership Meeting
Thursday March 19, 2020 7:00 p.m.
Hillcrest Baptist Church
3324 Park Drive, Nederland, Texas
See below for driving directions
Your Favorite Bird Pictures

The favorite bird pictures programs have been so well received that we are doing another program of members' favorite bird pictures. Dr. Harlan Stewart has again volunteered to prepare all photos submitted in advance into a Powerpoint presentation. The contributors of the pictures may, if they desire, talk briefly about their pictures. The pictures should be bird related, but do not need to be exhibition quality, especially if the subject is especially interesting for any reason.

In order to prepare a combined presentation, we will need to have the pictures by Saturday March 14. They can be emailed as attachments to Harlan at hstewartmail@gt.rr.com If necessary, send several separate emails. We will also be able to show other presentations that you prepare yourself if they are on a flash drive, and are in the Powerpoint format (preferred) or are a series of jpg files.

We plan to have the doors open no later than 6:00 p.m. Refreshments (sandwiches) are being provided by the Port Arthur CVB.

Directions to Hillcrest Baptist Church

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.

The Brown Pelican

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Issue number 260

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.

Saturday March 14. 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 a push mower to trim round the trees we have planted in the last few years. 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.

Contact John Whittle (409-722-4193 or johnawhittle@aol.com) to offer to help or for more details.

Thursday March 19, 2020. Membership Meeting. Members Favorite Photos. See page 1 for details.

Saturday March 21, 2020. Field Trip to Bolivar Flats. 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. 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 Rettilon Road. At the beach, if conditions permit, turn right (west) about 1/2 mile to the vehicle barrier. Follow recent tire tracks, and be careful to avoid any cuts that may have developed. 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 late.

The Flats in winter always have lots of plovers, sandpipers and other wading species. A large flock of American Avocets winters there.

Some walking is necessary on this field trip. If the tide is a long way out, the leaders may walk up to a mile from the vehicle barrier, but you can turnaround at any point.

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

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.



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

Where have all the Shrikes Gone?

An investigation into recent bird population changes in west Jefferson County

For many years now, local birders have birded the relatively open areas of west Jefferson County, looking primarily for open country birds. Many of us cover the same areas on a regular basis, especially in late fall and winter (and often in late spring and relatively early fall as well). This account focusses on January trips over the years. We have been able to use the records of selected of our car birding trips over the past 25 or so years to compile what we believe are counts sufficiently standardized to provide insight into changes in bird populations in winter in west Jefferson County. We have typically covered the south east and west parts of the county (west of South China Road) in one trip and the north central and central parts in another. The table combines the results of two trips in each January. We have not used other trips that covered the areas immediately west of Beaumont and mid-county because these are the areas that have been undergoing development over the time period we are considering. The trips we have used have been conducted on days when the weather has been reasonably favorable – no heavy or prolonged rain, and light to moderate winds. The trips cover essentially all the public roads in the area (approx. 175 miles). Trips have been conducted between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., as most of the open country species find their insect, invertebrate and mammal prey in the open. The middle of the day tends to make these prey items more active. These surveys have not been as standardized as Breeding Bird Surveys, which, however, probably find only a small fraction of the birds present, and cover a very limited area. They are, however, much more standardized than Christmas Bird Counts which are the only source of winter bird population information for a given area. Christmas Bird Counts have variable observer effort, may cover varying amounts of the area within the circle and are typically conducted in whatever weather eventuates on the day selected, with only minimal details recorded.

Before moving to indications of change, we need to review changes and significant events that may have impacted any changes. The area is an agricultural area where rice growing predominates with some cattle grazing and a small amount of crawfish farming, but with significant areas that are not in production in any given year. Changes over the period have included development of laser-leveling of rice fields (which reduces ponds remaining after draining) and a changeover to high yielding so-called "dwarf" varieties of rice (with possible implications to the amount of rice grain spilled during harvesting by combines).

Of course, anyone who has lived in the area knows that there were four major weather events during the period. These were Hurricane Rita (24 September 2005), Hurricane Ike (13 September 2008), Hurricane Harvey (25 August to 3 September 2017) and Tropical Storm Imelda (17 to 21 September 2019). Rita and Ike were principally wind events in west Jefferson County, but were accompanied by rainfall and flooding. Immediate effects on bird populations would show up in the January 2006 and January 2009 surveys. Hurricane

Harvey was effectively a tropical storm as far as wind was concerned when it lingered over all of Southeast Texas for a week or more, but the extensive rainfall left large areas of west Jefferson County under water for a long period. Tropical Storm Imelda affected a much smaller area. The maximum rainfall totals were of the same order as Harvey. The area of greatest impact was precisely the area covered by this study. Harvey effects would first show in the January 2008 surveys and Imelda effects in January 2020 surveys.

In our analysis (see table), we focused first on the Loggerhead Shrike. Shrike populations have been of concern nationally for the entire period of this analysis. One wonders, however, if much of this concern is caused by what may be a contraction of the range of this species in the northeast, and eBird reports do not suggest a drastic reduction in the overall population, which is more extensive west of the Mississippi than it is in the northeast. Nevertheless, we have an obvious issue with the species in west Jefferson County. From 1992 through 2002, the January trips produced about 100 Loggerhead Shrikes. In 2003 through 2005, there was a reduction to about two-thirds of the prior numbers, probably enough to be significant even given the vagaries of weather and other local short-term effects. The 2006 through 2008 numbers in the 30s immediately suggest Hurricane Ike had a very significant effect. The numbers from 2009 and 2010 show a rebound through probably 2014. Then a not so slow decline to 22 in 2017. In 2018, the first survey after Harvey, we found only eight, then five in 2019. In 2020, the first survey after Imelda, we found only two.

Determining that bird populations have actually changed and evaluating the magnitude of the changes is very difficult to accomplish in a short time frame, especially with a small number of surveys. In most cases, five to ten years is necessary to develop confidence that a trend is real. There are numerous factors that are difficult if not impossible to compensate for or even identify that have to be averaged out. But the reductions in numbers following Harvey and Imelda are so severe that we need to investigate. We've gone from about 100 to two in 28 years.

Why pick Loggerhead Shrikes for analysis? There is existing concern about declining shrike populations. The species is easily identified. The species is very conspicuous, normally perching in the open on utility or fence wires, or a bare tree, and rarely hidden from view.

Is the species disproportionately affected by one factor that doesn't affect others? Looking at the 2020 results (see the table), the decline in bird numbers has occurred over many species, so it is not confined to one species. That is some consolation, and may indicate that the effects of Harvey and Imelda are responsible, at least to some extent. But the effect on shrikes seems to be much more severe than on other species. Shrikes eat insects and other arthropods, amphibians, reptiles, small mammals, and birds. Their staple foods include agricultural pests such as grasshoppers, beetles and rodents. Insects generally dominate the Loggerhead Shrike's diet

during breeding season, while winter is said to bring a greater reliance on vertebrate prey. These include lizards, snakes, frogs, turtles, sparrows, goldfinches, mice, and shrews, to name just a few. However, we wonder if in the southern United States, insects may remain the most important prey. Loggerhead Shrikes are present in the whole of Southeast Texas year-round. But the species retracts in winter from the northern part of its range, and expands its range to the south in winter. We do not really know whether the birds we see in winter are the same ones that bred locally, or whether there is a migratory "exchange" in spring and fall.

One potentially informative "marker" species for comparison with shrikes is the Northern Mockingbird. Although it is more likely to frequent bushes and trees, it is nevertheless fairly conspicuous and likely to be detected. Although somewhat variable, there appears to be reductions in 2006 and 2009 following the hurricanes, but recovery of most of the loss was quick. After the flood events, numbers were reduced in 2018, but not further reduced in 2020. Unlike the other species discussed, mockingbirds rely extensively in winter on berries and fruits, whereas they eat mostly insects in spring. Northern Mockingbirds are not known to be significantly migratory.

West Jefferson County is known for its raptors. The most numerous of these is the Red-tailed Hawk. The numbers of Red-tailed Hawks vary quite a lot from year to year, something we have ascribed to a proclivity to make a pragmatic decision each year to migrate only as far south as necessary to find prey. However, on an anecdotal basis, the current winter (2019/20) has the highest concentration of Red-tailed Hawks in several years in most of greater Southeast Texas. In west Jefferson County, we counted 25 in 2018 and 35 in 2020. Some years, we have counted over 100 there, so there appears to have been an effect from Harvey and Imelda. Although they are recorded to eat large insects on occasion, the bulk of their diet consists of small mammals, especially rodents.

Northern Harrier is another raptor species seen in number each year. Ten to 20 would be normal number, but we only found two in 2018 and three in 2020. Interestingly, we found 12 in 2019, suggesting the effect of the flooding in 2018 was not long lived. Northern Harriers eat small mammals, large insects (especially grasshoppers), snakes, lizards, toads and frogs.

Like Loggerhead Shrikes, there is concern that American Kestrel numbers nationwide are declining. Most years from 1992 through 2005, the surveys found between 40 and 80, with occasional higher numbers. We can see reduced numbers in 2006 (28) and 2008 (20), but numbers in the years following through 2017, they returned to what is best described as "low normal." Numbers in 2018, 2019 and 2020 were depressed. Although they may attack small birds and mammals, kestrels in winter in our area eat mostly grasshoppers, cicadas, beetles, dragonflies; spiders; butterflies and moths.

You might well ask if similar reductions have occurred in other areas. Unfortunately, we do not have enough data to evaluate any other areas of greater Southeast Texas with any degree of scientific confidence. Anecdotally, we would suggest that the severe declines in 2018 and 2020 do not show up along coastal Jefferson County, or in nearby Chambers County, but equally, the numbers in these areas appear to be down quite significantly from the 1990-2005 base period.

In speculating on the causes of the declines, it looks as if the extensive and prolonged flooding caused by Harvey and Imelda caused more declines than the winds and shorter and less extensive flooding of Rita and Ike. One presumes that flooding tends to wash away the eggs of insects, thus reducing the food supply for species dependent on them. Flooding may kill plants or they may be scoured away by increased stream flows. Small rodents rely mostly on plants as their food source, and are mostly not equipped to travel long distances in search of food, so populations may decline severely. For the most part, birds are on the next level up in the food chain. However, they have one advantage over those below them in that they are able to travel even quite long distances quickly to find food if they cannot find it in their customary winter territories. This suggests that the effects of the weather events may be simply to displace some populations. What happens in the following seasons – how long it takes for bird populations to return to their former levels – depends on a number of factors. First, it depends on how quickly the insect and rodent populations rebound. Insect population may well rebound quite quickly as their life cycle is typically very short. Rodent populations may be somewhat slower to recover.

Whether the displaced birds, or others of their species, move back into the affected areas and how fast this occurs may depend on a number of factors. If the fidelity to their wintering sites is strong, they may try to move back as soon as the next winter season. However, wintering site fidelity may not be strong in many species, even those not known to be nomadic in winter. If the area the birds have moved into do not have an excess population of the species, the impetus to move back may not be great. And the birds that are first-winter birds may develop wintering site fidelity to their new winter territories. Only if the increased winter populations in these areas puts pressure of the food sources will the birds move quickly back into the original areas. What we may be seeing in west Jefferson County is that there is not sufficient pressure to cause the birds to return. It will take a long time for the area to be recolonized by some species!

You may also ask if migrating and breeding bird populations were affected by the hurricanes and storms. We do have data, albeit not quite as extensive, for May and September of each year from 1991, and we plan to analyze them after we see what May and September of 2020 bring.

John A. Whittle

Birds Seen in January Surveys in West Jefferson County 1992-2020

Species/Year	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Loggerhead Shrike	110	96	101	140	96	101	127	91	114	85	98	49	74	60	32	33	39	22	28	55	65	53	46	30	20	22	8	5	2	
Mourning Dove	36	66	30	42	58	70	32	121	119	45	127	116	129	70	83	39	25	45	92	76	57	94	27	65	27	30	41	25	46	
Sandhill Crane							43					127	59		174		35	130	57	240	334	603		28	230					
Killdeer	9	54	45	2	55	89	68	58	19	27	111	86	66	56	83	6	46	20	19	53	20	7	14	16	4	51	7	10	1	
Long-billed Dowitcher	2		200		202		450	200	20				3400	200	1	10	75		50	218	25	1050			513	300		180		
American Kestrel	76	95	64	77	74	42	69	44	70	97	73	42	51	42	28	42	53	20	37	39	66	45	31	35	62	36	18	25	25	
Greater Yellowlegs	30	135	18	8	29	13	690	26	11		2		100	93	7	3	37	32	2	75	6			5	15			14		
Great Blue Heron	6	1	3	2	12	6	20	4	5	3	4	22	6	5	6		1	2	4	6	1	1	2		5	4	7	2	2	
Great Egret	62	17	41	13	38	71	68	8	83	17	20	32	23	3	2	10	20	8	24	7	8	15	15	24	9	66	19	24	13	
Snowy Egret	7	200	33	7		16	78	1		3		6	3	24		1			12		21	9	7	20	11	8	1	6	2	
White-faced Ibis	120	201	415	1	15	100			38		50																			
White Ibis		50		10	12	505		6	58	45	85		22		41	25				217	141	450		122	670	117		3250		
Turkey Vulture	2	12	4	10	20	11	29	7	22	16	8	9	28	23	12	22	22	29	43	18	29	9	43	44	53	49	92	25	29	
White-tailed Kite		1	2	1	3	3		2	1	2	2	2	2	1	1				2							2				
Northern Harrier	15	9	9	12	30	15	23	16	21	22	13	26	22	13	7	12	19	16	21	16	22	6	6	10	13	6	2	13	3	
Red-tailed Hawk (all morphs)	48	60	47	30	72	43	59	42	38	81	65	29	45	39	31	45	35	24	64	104	126	74	34	29	63	32	25	60	35	
Eastern Phoebe	8	10	5	14	15	5	10	28	24	30	19	13	14	12	17	19	12	4	25	34	16	20	38	12	22	18	2	5	2	
Blue Jay	1	2		1	3	5	6			4	2	2	5	1	1		1	2		2		1	6	2	1	2	1		2	
Northern Mockingbird	51	40	36	24	43	52	43	72	47	67	24	85	32	91	35	44	9	23	38	26	49	38	40	12	46	20	10	12	12	
European Starling	61	300		9	69	136	438	41	134	103	597	142	97	93	134	72	207	144	20	176	214	316	101	94	240	98	86	51	4	
Savannah Sparrow	38	2	39	3	100	92	82	88	137	58	38	29	197	39	137	108	65	48	50	174	125	49	24	136	36	20	81	7	37	
Eastern Meadowlark	63	120	70	10	129	45	52	17	12	9	15	75	8	29	12	2	5	3	6	28	128	20	14	45	76	4	12			
meadowlark sp								5	41	21	12	35	43	8	33	41	3	18	21	45	202	8	20	28		3			2	
Yellow-rumped Warbler	13	8	2		7	11	3	3	3	8	5	21	6			1				11									11	
Northern Cardinal	6	18	4	1	12	1	13	7	9	10	14	29	12	8	9	1	2	2	3	1	1	1	3	1	5	1		1		

Field Trip to Cattail Marsh – 22 February 2020

February is pretty much the low point of the birding year in southeast Texas (although some might argue for July). The weather is iffy, many winter birds have started to return to the north and the spring migrants have yet to arrive. So, what do birders do in this dreary month? Go birding anyway of course! But where? Where the birds are! And one place where you can find birds in February is Cattail Marsh. That was the reason that more than twenty birders joined in the Golden Triangle Audubon Society's February field trip to Cattail Marsh.

Starting from the parking lot, the birding began right away. The trees surrounding the parking lot before you enter the marsh can contain a multitude of birds on a good day. This was not the best birding day but there were still birds to see. Plenty of Yellow-rumped Warblers were on display, all of the eastern "Myrtle" variety as expected. Ruby-crowned Kinglets were easily found which is not surprising as they are one of our most common wintering woodland birds. The thin call of a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was noted as was the sharp, metallic chip of the Orange-crowned Warbler. The hoped-for winter flock of songbirds did not materialize however so the group moved on.

The first stop on any Cattail Marsh trip has to be the boardwalk. Not only is it right at the entrance to the levee trails that traverse the marsh but it is also probably the best birding area. A Sora was quickly spotted foraging at the edge of the reeds and a Swamp Sparrow was hopping in the vegetation nearby. A Virginia Rail called from nearby but did not reveal itself. A Tricolored Heron stalked around the boardwalk while a Marsh Wren was more elusive. A Great Blue Heron stood in the shallows in the distance and an American Pipit called from overhead. Killdeer were nosily obvious as were Black-necked Stilts. Neotropic and Double-crested Cormorants flew near the boardwalk together making identification simple.

Ducks and other waterbirds are the big targets of this trip and many species are easily found from the boardwalk. Green-winged Teal were immediately found. These tiny ducks are not only one of the most abundant wintering ducks but also among the most colorful. With the males sporting bold rust and green heads in addition to the green wing patches they are named for, they make a truly striking scene. Blue-winged Teal may not be as colorful but were still appreciated by the birders as they are also common at Cattail Marsh in the winter. Not to be outdone, a few Cinnamon Teal were also spotted. The entirely reddish-orange males always stand out and Cattail Marsh is the best place on the upper Texas coast to spot this otherwise scarce western bird. Northern Pintail were found in small numbers at this spot along with numerous American Coots. A Pied-billed Grebe dove nearby as a cruising Northern Harrier disturbed the waterfowl.

Leaving the boardwalk was not easy but there was still more to see. Gulls streamed overhead, consisting mostly of Ring-billed Gulls but with plenty of Laughing and a few large Herring Gulls thrown in. The adjacent woods produced a Pine Warbler along with a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Carolina Wrens called and a Gray Catbird mewed from deeper in the trees. Both Great-tailed and Boat-tailed Grackles were seen

(and heard) on the day along with plenty of Red-winged Blackbirds and a single Brown-headed Cowbird. King Rails called from the marsh but refused to come out for a look. Common Yellowthroat was a bit more cooperative and Savannah Sparrows were seen along the levees occasionally. The birders in the front of the group caught a glimpse of a River Otter swimming in one of the cells though it quickly disappeared.

The usual route used on this trip runs about three miles and gives access to shallow and deep-water cells that can produce a number of different species. One cell gave several Gadwall in the water with a few Tree Swallows flying overhead. An Eastern Phoebe was flycatching from the margin of one cell and a Little Blue Heron foraged nearby. More rails called from the deep reeds including King and Virginia Rails and smaller Sora but all remained shy. Red-tailed Hawk soared overhead and White-faced Ibis fed in shallow water nearby. Both Snowy and Great Egrets were seen but the group struck out on the Roseate Spoonbills which are often present in the marsh. One (perhaps two) Palm Warbler was seen wagging its tail from a stand of willows. Both the yellow eastern type and the duller western type have been noted from the marsh recently. Turkey and Black Vultures soared lazily above and several Song Sparrows called from the edges of the cells. The deep-water cell at the north end of the marsh produced a few new species. Ring-necked Duck was noted by the group along with more numerous Lesser Scaup and Ruddy Ducks. A few Purple Martins were noted circling above the water. Martins are one of the earliest returning migrants and a sure sign that spring is right around the corner. Another sign of the change in season were several flocks of Fish Crows that passed over the marsh giving their nasal calls.

A couple of special birds are located near the northern end of the marsh. A little searching finally produced the hoped-for Least Grebe. This tiny grebe has become something of a specialty of Cattail Marsh. This is really more of south Texas bird that makes forays into more northerly parts of the state. The species has always turned up occasionally at Cattail Marsh but in recent years has been resident. Least Grebes have even bred at Cattail Marsh and produced babies and the population was growing for a while. In the last year or two, the Least Grebe population has dwindled and currently seems to be down to a single bird. The exact cause of these boom and bust cycles is unknown but the birders were thrilled to see the remaining Least Grebe present at Cattail Marsh.

The second special bird at this end of the marsh is the Bald Eagle. This magnificent raptor was rare on the upper Texas coast just a decade or two ago but is now doing quite well. A pair of Bald Eagles have nested at Cattail Marsh for some years now and the large nest is located in a pine tree near cell one at this end of the marsh. The birds were on display on the day of the field trip with two growing eaglets easily visible and an adult feeding the young. Exactly what was being fed to the babies was not clear but since American Coot seems to be a favorite of Bald Eagles at this time of year that would be a good bet. Southern Bald Eagles nest in the winter specifically because of the abundant food source that the numerous

wintering waterfowl provide. Bald Eagles may be more famous for feeding on fish but coots, ducks, geese are all on the menu along with occasional small mammals and even turtles. The group was pleased to get good looks at the Bald Eagles as they are always a highlight of any Cattail Marsh trip.

Circling back around to the front of the marsh, the birders finished the day at the boardwalk where they started. A few birders finally got a brief glimpse of a Virginia Rail but it was not very cooperative and quickly disappeared again. Despite the distance, the boardwalk provides a good vantage point to view the Bald Eagle nest and the group was able to show the birds to several passersby. A flock of swallows fed over the nearby marsh and included both Tree Swallows and Purple Martins. Looking through the flock a glimpse of a rusty breast and forked tail confirmed the presence of a Barn Swallow as well. A little on the early side but another welcome sign of spring! February may be one of the duller birding months but, if you come to a great spot like Cattail Marsh, there are still plenty of birds to be found!

The following species were recorded by the trip leaders:

Blue-winged Teal (75); Cinnamon Teal (4); Northern Shoveler (4); Gadwall (25); American Wigeon (1); Northern Pintail (5); Green-winged Teal (50); Ring-necked Duck (2); Lesser Scaup

(55); Ruddy Duck (40); Least Grebe (1); Pied-billed Grebe (6); King Rail (3); Virginia Rail (3); Sora (8); Common Gallinule (30); American Coot (125); Black-necked Stilt (10); Killdeer (4); Laughing Gull (40); Ring-billed Gull (150); Herring Gull (5); Neotropic Cormorant (4); Double-crested Cormorant (6); Great Blue Heron (3); Great Egret (6); Snowy Egret (2); Little Blue Heron (5); Tricolored Heron (4); Cattle Egret (3); Black-crowned Night-Heron(1); White Ibis (3); White-faced Ibis (30); Black Vulture (2); Turkey Vulture (20); Northern Harrier (3); Sharp-shinned/Cooper's Hawk (1); Bald Eagle (4); Red-tailed Hawk (4); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (1); Eastern Phoebe (3); Fish Crow (28); Purple Martin (20); Tree Swallow (25); Barn Swallow (1); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (7); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (3); House Wren (2); Marsh Wren (2); Carolina Wren (1); Gray Catbird (1); American Robin (10); American Pipit (1); Savannah Sparrow (5); Song Sparrow (3); Swamp Sparrow (10); Red-winged Blackbird (60); Brown-headed Cowbird (1); Boat-tailed Grackle (4); Great-tailed Grackle (10); Orange-crowned Warbler (3); Common Yellowthroat (2); Palm Warbler (3); Pine Warbler (1); Yellow-rumped Warbler (25); Northern Cardinal (2). 63 species.

Steve Mayes

Bird Sightings – February 2020

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: Once again, a lot of neotropical migrants that usually winter further south.

Seen in our Core Counties (listed above)

Chuck-will's-widow	Feb 2-27	JEF-SW (1) Howard Davis, SH, JHH, mult obs
Brown Booby	Feb 2-23	JEF-Pleasure Is N and S Levee (up to 5) mult obs
Barn Swallow	Feb 22-23	JEF-TP (1) Steve Mayes, mult obs
Wood Thrush	Feb 27,29	JEF-SW (1) JHH, Ashley Fuselier
Chestnut-coll. Longspur	Feb 1-17	JEF-Pleasure Is N Levee (1) mult obs
American Redstart	Feb 6,23	JEF-SW (1 fem) Coen Dexter, Brenda Wright, JHH
Northern Parula	Feb 29	JEF-SW (1 fem) Ashley Fuselier, JAW
Yellow-thr. Warbler	Feb 8	JEF-Nederland (1) Trisha Kelley
	Feb 23	JEF-Port Arthur (1) Greg Jackson
Painted Bunting	Feb 6-23	JEF-Nederland (1 male) HS

Nearby Counties

Cackling Goose	Feb 14	CAM-Illinois Plant Road (10) David Booth, Judson Lassiter, Dale Hamilton
Black Scoter	Feb 24	CAM- Hwy 82 betw Johnson Bayou and Holly Beach (6) Joan Garvey, Mark Meunier
Eastern Whip-poor-will	Feb 15	CAM-Willow Is (1) Paul Conover
Common Ground Dove		
	Feb 2	HAS-Warren Ranch (1) J. Berner, mult obs
	Feb 17	HAS-Addicks Reservoir S Levv (2) Alessandra Garofalo
	Feb 27	HAS-John Paul Landing Park (1) Kendra Kocab, mult obs
Yellow Rail	Feb 6-7	CAM-Creole (6) Kevin Ringelman, mult obs

Pectoral Sandpiper

	Feb 1	CHA-Jenkins Rd (1) Randy Mickle
	Feb 25	CHA-Oak Island Rd (25) Scott Somershoe, mult obs
	Feb 27	GAL-Yacht Basin Rd (1) mult,obs
	Feb 28	GAL-Bojivar Flats (1) Greg Cook)
Semi-palm. Sandpiper	Feb27	GAL-Yacht Basin Rd (3) mult obs
California Gull	Feb 14	GAL-Apfel Park Rd (1) Dave Herdeggen
Great Black-backed Gull	Feb 15	GAL-Texas City Dike (1 imm) Scott Buckel
Wood Stork	Feb 22	LIB-Champion Lake (12) John Bartos (soaring – no photo)
Magnificent Frigatebird	Feb 9	CAM-Cameron Prairie NWR (1 juv) Matthew Kugel
Brown Booby	Jan 31	GAL-West Bay N of Sportsman's Rd (up to 3) continuing bird
Least Bittern	Feb 25	CAM-Cameron Prairie NWR (1) Joan Garvey, Mark Meunier
	Feb 29	CHA-Turtle Bayou Nature Pres. (1) Mike Austin)
Ladder-back. W'dpecker	Feb 2	HAS-Warren Ranch (2) J. Berner, mult obs
Say's Phoebe	Feb 2-28	HAS-El Franco Lee Park area (1) Marie Asscherick,
	Feb 8	CAM-Willow Is (1) Andrew From
	Feb 16	CAM-Lacassine NWR-Pool Unit (1) Elaine Hendricks
Couch's Kingbird	Feb 11	LIB-Travis Park (1) Andrew Dickinson

	Feb 14-24	CAL-Choupique Rd S at Jay Duhon Rd (1) David Booth, Dale Hamilton, J. Lassiter, mult obs
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	Feb 28	CAL-Ward Line Rd (1) Beth Kramer, Charlotte Chehotsky
Red-eyed Vireo	Feb 25	HAS-Rice Univ (1) Stuart Nelson
Barn Swallow		
	Jan 31	HAS-Archbishop Fiorenza Park (1) Donald Fullmer
	Feb 12	HAS-Bane Park (3) B. Moffett
	Feb 12	HAS-Cypress Park (3) Ross Silcock
	Feb 16	HAS-Brunswick Lakes (1) Marie Asscherick
	Feb 16	CAM-Lacassine NWR Pool unit (1) Eric Ripma
	Feb 17	HAS-San Jacinto Bttlgrnd (1) Sonny Bratz
Cliff Swallow	Feb 21	HAS-El Franco Lee Park (6) Kirsti Carr
	Feb 22-23	HAS--San Jacinto Bttlgrnd (1) Stuart Nelson, Chris Hammond
Bewick's Wren	Feb 2-9	HAS-Warren Ranch (1) J. Berner, mult obs
	Feb 16	HAS-Sharp Road (1) Sonny Bratz
Veery	Feb 6	HAS-Armand Bayou NC (1) Michael Weaver
Wood Thrush	Feb 16-17	HAS-El Franco Lee Park (1) Caleb Gordon, Liston Rice
European Goldfinch	Feb 5-9	HAS-Bear Creek Park (1) J. Berner, Timothy White, mult obs
Lark Bunting	Feb 2-9	HAS-Warren Ranch (1) J. Berner, mult obs
Henslow's Sparrow	Feb 14	HAS-Bear Creek Park (1) Nicholas DeMaio
Spotted Towhee	Jan 31-Feb 27	HAS-San Jacinto Bttlgrnd (1) Stuart Nelson, mult obs
	Feb 8-9	HAS-Bear Creek Park (1) Letha Slaigle
Yellow-breasted Chat	Feb 17	HAS-San Jacinto Bttlgrnd (1) Sonny Bratz
Yellow-head. Blackbird	Feb 1,-29	CHA-Oak Is Rd (up to 5) Michelle Rometry, mult obs

Bullock's Oriole

	Jan 31-Feb 26	GAL-FM518 E area, League City (1) B.Anderson
	Feb 1-26	HAS-White Oak Park (1) Wendy Wright, mult obs
	Feb 12-25	HAS- Baytown Town Center (1) G. Campbell, mult obs
Tennessee Warbler	Jan 31	HAS- Baytown Town Center (1) Gene Campbell
Nashville Warbler	Jan 31, Feb 17	HAS-Seabrook (1) Hilary Gibbs
	Feb 15	LIB- FM1008 area N of Kenefick (1) Colette Micallef
Tropical Parula	Feb 1-22	HAS-Armand Bayou NC (2) Farokh Jamalyaria, mult obs
	Feb 8	HAS-Seabrook (1) Sarah Wiesbrock, Arnaud Lacroix
Yellow Warbler	Feb 7	HAS-Archbishop Fiorenza Pk (1) Janey Woodley
Yellow-throated Warbler	Feb 23	CAL-Lake Charles (1) Paul Zimmerman

Prairie Warbler

	Jan 31	HAS- Baytown Town Center (1) Gene Campbell
	Feb 11	LIB-CR125 Loop (1) Andrew Dickinson
	Feb 22	CHA-ANWR Access Rd 300 m north of entrance(1 male) Christian Walker, Paul DiFore

Black-thr. Green Warbler	Feb 8	HAS-East End Park (1) Ken Beene
Summer Tanager	Jan 31, Feb 27	CAL-French Settlement (1) Beth Kramer
Western Tanager	Feb 5-7	HAS-nr. Memorial at Gessner (1 fem) Sandi Templeton, mult obs
	Feb 6	HAS-Houston Botanic Gdn, Sims Bayou (1) Mary Anne Weber
	Feb 27	GAL-High Is Smith Oaks (1) mult obs
Black-headed Grosbeak	Feb 9	HAS-Cypress (1) Kyle Harmon
	Feb 17-22	HAS--San Jacinto Bttlgrnd (1) Sonny Bratz, James Rieman
Blue Grosbeak	Feb 29	GAL-Port Bolivar (1) Chris Bick, Cin-Ty Lee
Painted Bunting	Feb 14,29	CAM-Peveto Wds (1) Jay Huner, Dave Patton

Feb 17	CAL-Lake Charles 10th St (1) Melissa and Cyndi Simon
Feb 21	HAS--San Jacinto Bttlgrnd (1 fem/imm male) Steve Rogow

Abbreviations used: ANG – Angelina County; ANWR – Anahuac NWR; BF – Bolivar Flats; CAL – Calcasieu Parish; CAM – Cameron Parish; CHA – Chambers County; 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; 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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RARE BIRD ALERTS

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

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.