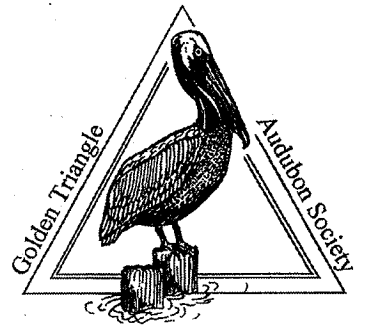


# The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 26 No. 5/6

May/June 2020

## **Field Trip to Hardin County – Saturday 6 June 2020**

Unless the Covid-19 situation changes significantly for the worse, we plan to run our usual field trip to Hardin County on Saturday 6 June 2020.

This is a great opportunity to see the breeding songbirds of the southern part of the Big Thicket. We will focus on the area north of Silsbee to look for the breeding birds of the area. This is typically a half-day trip. We plan to look for the nesting species of the area – Hooded, Kentucky, Pine, Prairie and Prothonotary, and Swainson's Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, White-eyed, Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireo, Indigo and Painted Bunting, Gray Catbird, Summer Tanager, Acadian Flycatcher, Brown-headed Nuthatch and others. We will likely not find all the listed species, but most years we find a good selection of them. Swainson's Warbler is a particular target of this trip, and we have often been rewarded with excellent views of this normally very secretive species on this field trip. Yellow-breasted Chats have often been seen perched high up in the open. This area also has breeding Prairie Warblers.

The meeting time and place will be at 7:00 a.m. (note the necessary early start if we are to find the breeding birds!) at the shopping center on the northeast corner of the intersection of FM92 and FM418 in the northern part of Silsbee. To reach this from Beaumont, take US 69 north and then US 96 north. Take Business 96 into and through downtown Silsbee. When Business 96 turns right, continue straight on FM92 for 3/4 mile to the shopping center. We normally finish sometime around noon or shortly after.

Birding is a generally outdoor activity, but on this trip we will be in vehicles traveling along the roads of rural Hardin County until we see or hear birds or find habitat that is favored by our target species. Please avoid congregating outside your vehicle in the parking lot in Silsbee, and exercise discretion when outside your vehicle when we find interesting birds.

## *The Brown Pelican*

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### Golden Triangle Audubon Society

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

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## Calendar of Events

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

**Saturday June 6, 2020. Field trip to Hardin County.** See p.1 for details

### Future Programs and Field Trips.

As this is written in late May, it is not clear how many and which of our normal activities we will be able to put on during the remainder of the year.

We have discussed our normal early August field trip to Liberty County, and have tentatively set this for Saturday August 15. This trip is planned for early August primarily to search for Swallow-tailed Kites, which have in past years congregated in the Trinity River bottoms in significant numbers prior to migrating south for the winter. However, that is rather later in August than ideal, and, if some other scheduling conflicts are resolved, it is possible we might change it to August 1. (Note that the next issue of the *Brown Pelican* will, as is normal in the summer, be a combined July/August issue which will be published in early August, so if you are interested in participating in the Liberty field trip, monitor the web-site at [www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org) for confirmation of the date.)

Currently, it seems unlikely that we will be able to hold an August Membership Meeting, more because repairs to the Tropical Storm Imelda damage to the Garden Center may well not be completed in time than anything else. It is much too early to plan beyond August. There would appear to be no reason not to plan a Bolivar Flats field trip in late August. We do have a program lined up that can be presented at a membership meeting in September

if it is considered safe to hold meetings with up to 50 persons. The Gulf Coast Bird Observatory has not announced any decision about the Smith Point Hawk Watch. If it is held as usual, our field trip to it, again an exclusively an outdoor event, can relatively easily be held in compliance even with existing guidelines. September 26 would be the preferred date if there are no conflicts.

### Status of Birding Sites

In the previous issue of the *Brown Pelican* we listed the status of access to local birding sites. Local emergency orders classified outdoor recreation as an essential activity, so local birding continued although some birders obviously made their own decision to stay at home more than usual.

We note that the CDC has recently stated that the Corvid-19 virus does not appear to survive well on hard surfaces, and that essentially all transmission appears to be person to person, without a great risk of outdoor transmission, especially away from crowds constrained to be in close proximity to each other.

Here is the current status of the local birding site as best we can determine.

**Texas Ornithological Society.** All TOS properties remained accessible, with any break, although visitation by out of area birders was very light.

**Houston Audubon Sanctuaries.** Houston Audubon officially reopened its sanctuaries on May 4. However, they kept the restrooms closed. This was an exceptionally poor decision, as they are in areas where there are few other public facilities. Most human beings cannot turn off the need and closing them doubtless led to the use of



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less visible parts of the sanctuaries, probably creating a much greater risk to health than careful use of proper facilities.

**Texas State Parks.** The parks were eventually completely closed, and began to reopen in early May using TPWD's cumbersome and not very intuitive on-line reservation system, and are still only partially open. We suspect many potential day visitors to Sea Rim

SP decided to simply go "next door" to McFaddin Beach, free and unrestricted. Village Creek SP, still recovering from last year's flooding is open to the extent possible. TPWD is a very bureaucratic agency, and it may be some time before full opening of the Parks occurs.

**National Park Service.** The Big Thicket Visitor Center is closed but trails are open except for some with flood damage.

**National Wildlife Refuges.** Although the FWS-NWR website said that trails and outside areas would remain open, the entrance gates at Anahuac and McFaddin NWRs were closed and locked and not reopened until May 15, but limited to 7 AM to 7PM for no obvious reason. The Visitor Center and the Visitor Information Station remain closed.

## Migration Count – 9 May 2020

This was the first migration count since Tropical Storm Imelda in mid-September 2019. Because of the flooding caused by that storm, we were unable to conduct a fall count in 2019. Of course, spring and fall bird distributions, especially those of migrating species, are very different, and the fall count this year will be our first real opportunity to look for any intermediate term effects. We have looked in this count at the numbers of resident species, but even there, there are large differences between spring, the breeding season for many resident species, and the fall. Imelda was the fourth storm event in the last fifteen years – following Rita in September 2005, Ike in September 2008, Harvey in late August 2017. This was an unusual series of storms at relatively short time intervals. Before Rita, one has to go back to the 1960s to find a storm that caused widespread effects on the local habitat. It will be a few years before we will be able to determine if there has been any listing effects.

We had the good fortune to have a cold front pass through the area on the evening of May 8 leaving the area with north winds, and causing migrating birds arriving across the Gulf to descend into the coastal woodlots and remain overnight. Thus, Sabine Woods held a nice diverse array of Neotropical migrants, and this helped propel the count to a total of 186 species, a number only exceeded in 2012 (189), 2013 (197) and 2017 (192).

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks are now firmly established in the area, and are now more prominent in the southern half of the county. Fulvous Whistling-Ducks, although not the relative newcomers to the area that Black-bellied are, can nevertheless be relied on to be present, particularly in spring, often in association with Black-bellied. Populations appear to be relatively stable, while Black-bellied populations may still be increasing. Blue-winged Teal is one of the few duck species that winters mostly south of the United States, but a few can be found locally any somewhat since then, but numbers were back up this year. Numbers in Cattail Marsh and the rice growing areas of west Jefferson County were good. Usually, we find one or two lingering wintering ducks of other species, probably mostly crippled during the hunting season, but this year none were detected. Numbers of our year round resident puddle duck, perhaps more accurately described as a dabbling duck, the Mottled Duck have been a matter of concern for a couple of decades now, and our finding only 22 this year did nothing to alleviate the concern.

Rock Pigeon numbers were at a low not seen since the 1990s. Eurasian Collared-Doves are a relative newcomer to Southeast Texas – the first Spring Count to find any was in 2000 – but the local population seems to have stabilized. We recorded 43 this year. The first year we found a significant number of White-winged Doves was 2004. They are a fixture anywhere birds are being fed, but, perhaps good for the sake of other dove species, numbers seems to have plateaued, although it is still the most numerous dove species in the count. Before the invasion of the White-winged Doves, Mourning Doves were

quite common in residential areas, but they were largely crowded out, and moved to the open areas. Numbers were down again this year, and we wonder if the storms have taken a toll on their food sources in the open areas. One Common Ground-Dove was found, only the second ever. The previous one was in 2012.

We found three American Golden-Plovers, the first since 2013. The species is normally associated with an early migration pattern (in March mostly) although it seems there are always a few through early May. Ordinarily, Passerine migrants passing through Southeast Texas in March are of species that breed in the southern areas of the US, and more northerly breeding populations come through later. However, shorebirds may well be different from Passerines. eBird data suggest that the highest concentrations of breeding Golden-Plovers are along the shores of the Beaufort Sea in northern Alaska and northwest Nunavut, with slightly less numerous concentrations along the shores of Hudson Bay and nearby western Nunavut. A caution is in order as these areas are very remote, and very hard to access, so that eBird data may be heavily biased towards the accessible areas. The available data suggests that the high concentrations of Golden-Plovers do not reach the Beaufort Sea shores until late May at the earliest, so they must not proceed very quickly. eBird data is much more comprehensive in the lower 48 states, and suggest they are present, probably in low concentrations, across a wide swath of the eastern US during April and early May. Shorebirds are thought to migrate in long (up to 2000 mile) hops, followed by at least four-days of rest. The known fall migration path of the species is well east of the Mississippi even from the westernmost part of the breeding range. None of this fits a normal migratory pattern, and it would make an interesting study to elucidate the migratory pathways and stopover habits of Golden Plovers. From a local perspective, it would be interesting to know where the March migrants go to breed, and where the May migrants breed.

Most of the small plovers have left our area by the time of the count, but often we find some. We haven't found a Snowy Plover since 2016. This is strange, since before 2016, it was easy to find Snowy Plovers in numbers along the Jefferson County Coast. eBird maps and published data suggest the species breeds on the California and Oregon coast, with another larger "interior" population in Kansas and Missouri. The populations along the Gulf Coast showed some evidence of breeding during the middle of the last decade, but perhaps this was an anomaly. We did find a Piping Plover and two Semipalmated Plovers, but only five Wilson's Plovers. The numbers of Wilson's Plovers had increased 2012-2014 and remained above average through 2017, but we seem to have since decreased. As you all know, the Piping Plover is a species of great concern, because it is a widely distributed species perceived to be declining. The most recent readily available scientific population estimates for US shorebirds dates from 2012. It gives estimates for 8400 and 8600 respectively for Piping and Wilson's Plovers. Wilson's

Plovers, which breed along the Gulf and lower Atlantic coasts, and the Caribbean plus some on the Baja California coast, are not currently treated as threatened or endangered because it is perceived that the populations are stable.

Spotted Sandpipers are mainly a wintering species in Southeast Texas, but migration is still underway in early May, and 32 is a high count. Identifying the small Sandpipers ("Peeps") requires a good view and time to study the birds. So many along the shore go unidentified as to species. Nevertheless, the number of all "Peeps" found at 427 was high. Most were likely Western and Semipalmated Sandpipers, both of which migrate north quite late, and many remain locally well into May.

Short-billed Dowitchers, very much a bird of Gulf of Mexico shores and flats were absent again, after 45 last year, but none 2017-18. However, separating Long-billed and Short-billed Dowitchers is not easy, especially if they are quiet, and the relatively high number recorded each year as dowitcher species makes meaningful analysis very difficult.

There must be some concern about Least Terns locally. The number found on the count is highly variable, perhaps reflecting the fact that many of the ones we do see may well nest across the Ship Channel in Cameron Parish, and in inaccessible beaches in Jefferson County, and thus may be feeding unseen. Still, finding 16 after last year's disappointing 17 is concerning. Numbers in 2015-2017 were over 100 in each year. Only in recent years have there been Black Skimmer colonies in Jefferson County, but this year's 79 was modest compared with the 293 in 2017.

It did not come as much of a surprise that three Brown Boobies were seen on Pleasure Island, even though this was a new species for the count. They are relatively conspicuous large birds, and their range has been spreading quite quickly westwards along the coast of Louisiana and Texas. They are strong fliers and doubtless can cover substantial distances each day. They were first found on Pleasure Island in December 2016, and have been seen there with increasing frequency ever since. The species is also being recorded with increasing frequency in the open waters of the Gulf, including from cruise ships up to two or three hundred miles from land, but of course, the Gulf is dotted with numerous oil platforms, on which the Boobies are quite happy to perch.

The number of Great Blue Herons certainly needs watching. Ten is a very low number, perhaps an anomaly, but anecdotal reports suggest otherwise. A lot of Great Blue Herons are found in ditches and small gullies, and it may be that they were scoured by the waters of Imelda, removing all the fish. If that is the case, the species will come back but it may come slowly. Other herons are faring somewhat better. Cattle Egret numbers are close to the highs of a few years ago. Black-crowned Night-Herons are much more numerous than the spring counts suggest. Might they be sitting on eggs in May in relatively inaccessible rookeries? Yellow-crowned Night-Herons are more likely to nest and feed in residential area, to

the point that they become a nuisance in places, but the spring counts are lower than would be expected.

We sometimes come across large numbers of White Ibis in a single field in greater Southeast Texas, but 26 is very low following only 64 last year, instead of the 100 to 200 that was normal in prior years. We have come across fields with many more than 26 in a single field in recent months, but they probably were in Chambers County. Perhaps rice farming was on a different time line there, but we need to attempt to find out if this low number may have been a result of the flooding in the recent storms. In recent years, there has usually been a Glossy Ibis at Cattail Marsh. This year we found 4 there. While the number is still small relative to the total 300+ dark ibis, it is very interesting. Distinguishing Glossy from White-faced Ibis is not easy and requires a good view and time to study. Determining the true status of Glossy Ibis in the area is hindered by a misguided eBird policy to "default" all dark ibis not determined to be one species or the other to White-faced. This policy has been aggressively pursued in Louisiana west of the Mississippi, so we really have no idea how many Glossy Ibis their might be there. It is high time scientific rigor is applied, and all dark ibis not seen well enough to check each individual bird should be recorded as Glossy/White-faced (as eBird prefers over the *Plegadis* species nomenclature we use if it is forced to acknowledge that there are some that cannot be identified as to species).

While we have found one Swallow-tailed Kite in most recent years— last year was an exception — it was very nice to find four in three different locations in the county. It seems the species is slowly increasing (and spreading) from the very low number of 20 or 30 years ago. The pattern of White-tailed Hawk being recorded every other year continued, with none this year. Jefferson County is on the extreme eastern edge of the range of the species, and there are probably one or two pairs resident in the county. It would be nice if we had more. We did not find any Broad-winged Hawks in 2018 or 2019, so it was encouraging to find nine. Red-tailed Hawks jumped up to 16 last year, and ten this year suggests that there are probably a number of breeding pairs in the county. Swainson's Hawk is another species that reaches the eastern edge of its range in Jefferson County, but ten suggests it is reasonably firmly established.

Owls are always difficult to detect because of their nocturnal habits, but the roost of the Barn Owls is known and accessible. They raise young most years, but the young seem to move out of the county. However, two groups found six Barred Owls.

The Crested Caracara is now well established in the county, but the numbers seem to have plateaued. It would be interested to know if it is still spreading to the west. We have not found an American Kestrel since 2000. One does not have to go very far north to find breeding Kestrels, but somehow they are avoiding Jefferson County in spring, although usually very obvious in winter.

Eastern Kingbird numbers increased somewhat from the lows

of the last two years, but were still low, while Scissor-tailed Flycatcher numbers remained low. This may be providing some insight into the impacts of the recent storms on the insect population, which may have been reduced by having the insect eggs and larvae washed away in the aftermath of the storms.

We make a particular point of examining Loggerhead Shrike populations carefully because of documented substantial reductions over the last 25 years or so. This year showed a modest increase over the lows of the last two years in both the western part of the county, and also along the areas close to the Gulf.

Vireo numbers were very much normal but with Yellow-throated Vireo numbers setting a new high for the count. This species, along with White-eyed and Red-eyed Vireos nest, probably nests in the extreme northern swath of the county, while Warbling and Philadelphia are exclusively migrants in the county, so numbers vary from year to year.

There were a lot of swallows on count day this year. Purple Martin numbers were good again, while Tree Swallows were numerous at 192. Tree Swallows nest mostly well north of Jefferson County, but there is increasing evidence of local breeding. Perhaps many are first year birds, but some young have been seen. Six hundred and thirty five Barn Swallows is a very high number, and suggests that numbers of insects that Barn Swallows feed on are healthy. Might the dramatic difference from Scissor-tailed Flycatchers and Eastern Kingbirds be because the latter feed on larger insects while swallows feed on the very small insects? Most of us have seen the former with large insects in their bills, but swallows are only rarely seen with prey that has not already disappeared down their throats. Cliff Swallows began to breed in the area at essentially one site, in Sea Rim SP, in the early 1990s. Very little expansion took place in county until about the turn of the century, but now they are under almost every significant bridge and overpass. The bridges across the Neches between Port Arthur and Bridge City offer large areas of artificial cliff and typically one can count nearly 1000 there nowadays. Getting a good enough view to confirm Cave Swallows is difficult, but there are always a few around. But we do suggest that those swallows of the Cliff/Cave complex that cannot practically be separated into Cliff and Cave might be better recorded as Cliff/Cave.

Tufted Titmouse numbers have declined in recent years to single digit numbers with no relief in sight. The species is relatively easily detected by sight or call. They are unable to create their own nest cavities, so are dependent on natural cavities, mostly in dead trees, and abandoned woodpecker holes. It is not clear why they are not thriving in the county, while other woodland species have not exhibited the same declines. Carolina Chickadees, while nowhere near as common as they are just a few miles north, generally number about 50. Normally we find between one and five Blue-gray Gnatcatchers; this year we found two. Eastern Bluebirds at 49 were close to the highest numbers in the history of the count.

Lark Sparrow is a species that shows up on the count about once every five years or so, and this was one of the years. Seaside Sparrows are year round residents of the coastal marshes in the county, and the 25 found was close to average. A few Nelson's Sparrows and a few Savannah Sparrows, both winter residents only, linger most years, and two and five respectively were normal. Although the various blackbird species are present in significantly fewer numbers in the rice growing areas of western Jefferson County than they used to be, nevertheless blackbird and grackle numbers were normal.

The first question many ask during migration is "how many warbler species did you find?" On this count, the answer was 20, a very large number for a May date. It has long been known that the numbers of migrants continue high into the middle of May, but fronts such as the one late on May 8, strong enough to force them down despite an increasing urge to get to their breeding grounds, are relatively rare. While most were the expected "late" warblers, Cape May and Mourning Warblers are rare. Eighteen of the species were seen in Sabine Woods, and the other two were Pine Warbler (at Edgewater Picnic area) and Blue-winged Warbler (at Cattail Marsh). Noteworthy were 17 Magnolia Warblers and 23 Bay-breasted Warbler.

Any day with lots of migrant warblers will always also have other migrants, although this event was probably noteworthy for the relatively limited numbers of them. Only three Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, only three Blue Grosbeaks and a modest 13 Indigo Buntings were recorded. Six Scarlet Tanagers were also fairly low; and all but two of the Summer Tanagers were already in the western part of the county. The 31 Swainson's Thrushes were all in Sabine Woods. Eastern Wood-Pewees at 19 were the most prominent migrant flycatchers, along with six Acadian Flycatchers, one in Cattail Marsh.

Finally, House Sparrow numbers have been declining over the last few years and 107 was quite low. However, the numbers are not as concerning as they are in their native southern England where they have been declining precipitously.

Participants: Michael Cooper, Linda and Howard Davis, Sherry Gibson, John Haynes, Sheila Hebert, Thomas Hellweg, Gary and Denise Kelley, Steve Mayes, Debbie McMullen, Sherrie Roden, Christine Siva, Harlan Stewart, Jana and John Whittle, Eric Wolf.

Also used were additional sightings entered in eBird by Ben Cowan, Trisha Kelley, Barbara Riley, Jace Stansbury.

WHISTLING-DUCK, Black-bellied (164); WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous (42); DUCK, Wood (2); TEAL, Blue-winged (241); DUCK, Mottled (22); SCAUP, Lesser (2); DUCK, species (1); GREBE, Pied-billed (2); PIGEON, Rock (47); DOVE, Eurasian Collared- (43); DOVE, Inca (2); GROUND-DOVE, Common (1); DOVE, White-winged (153); DOVE, Mourning (175); CUCKOO, Yellow-billed (21); NIGHTHAWK, Common (15); SWIFT, Chimney (22); HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-throated (18); HUMMINGBIRD,

Species (1); RAIL, King (7); RAIL, Clapper (16); SORA (1); GALLINULE, Common (66); COOT, American (11); GALLINULE, Purple (17); STILT, Black-necked (97); AVOCET, American (12); PLOVER, Black-bellied (48); PLOVER, American Golden (3); PLOVER, Wilson's (5); PLOVER, Semipalmated (2); PLOVER, Piping (1); KILLDEER (72); WHIMBREL (32); CURLEW, Long-billed (2); GODWIT, Hudsonian (10); TURNSTONE, Ruddy (38); SANDPIPER, Stilt (1); SANDERLING (372); DUNLIN (175); SANDPIPER, Baird's (3); SANDPIPER, Least (54); SANDPIPER, White-rumped (231); SANDPIPER, Pectoral (11); SANDPIPER, Semipalmated (75); SANDPIPER, Western (18); SANDPIPER, Peep (427); DOWITCHER, Long-billed (2); DOWITCHER species (12); PHALAROPE, Wilson's (50); SANDPIPER, Spotted (32); SANDPIPER, Solitary (1); YELLOWLEGS, Greater (15); WILLET (33); YELLOWLEGS, Lesser (26); YELLOWLEGS species (1); GULL, Laughing (296); GULL, Ring-billed (4); GULL, Herring (6); TERN, Least (18); TERN, Gull-billed (1); TERN, Caspian (33); TERN, Black (35); TERN, Common (0); TERN, Forster's (25); TERN, Royal (65); TERN, Sandwich (4); SKIMMER, Black (79); BOOBY, Brown (3); ANHINGA (2); CORMORANT, Neotropic (110); CORMORANT, Double-crested (2); CORMORANT species (6); PELICAN, Brown (33); BITTERN, Least (4); HERON, Great Blue (10); EGRET, Great (146); EGRET, Snowy (95); HERON, Little Blue (66); HERON, Tricolored (31); EGRET, Cattle (981); HERON, Green (32); NIGHT-HERON, Black-crown. (2); NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crown. (35); IBIS, White (39); IBIS, Glossy (4); IBIS, White-faced (264); IBIS, Plegadis species (62); SPOONBILL, Roseate (40); VULTURE, Black (76); VULTURE, Turkey (131); VULTURE species (10); OSPREY (7); KITE, White-tailed (2); KITE, Swallow-tailed (4); KITE, Mississippi (11); EAGLE, Bald (2); HAWK, Red-shouldered (9); HAWK, Broad-winged (5); HAWK, Swainson's (5); HAWK, Red-tailed (10); HAWK species (1); OWL, Barn (2); OWL, Great Horned (1); OWL, Barred (6); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (26); WOODPECKER, Downy (20); WOODPECKER, Pileated (4); CARACARA, Crested (12); WOOD-PEWEE, Eastern (19); FLYCATCHER, Acadian (6); FLYCATCHER, Traill's (1); FLYCATCHER, Least (3); FLYCATCHER, Empidonax (3); PHOEBE, Eastern (1); FLYCATCHER, Great Crested (20); KINGBIRD, Eastern (64); FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tailed (19); SHRIKE,

Loggerhead (41); VIREO, White-eyed (23); VIREO, Yellow-throated (11); VIREO, Philadelphia (5); VIREO, Warbling (1); VIREO, Red-eyed (46); JAY, Blue (93); CROW, American (16); CROW, Fish (14); CROW, Species (22); SWALLOW, N. Rough-winged (9); MARTIN, Purple (130); SWALLOW, Tree (192); SWALLOW, Bank (35); SWALLOW, Barn (635); SWALLOW, Cliff (907); SWALLOW, Cave (8); SWALLOW, Cave/Cliff (4); SWALLOW species (13); CHICKADEE, Carolina (38); TITMOUSE, Tufted (3); WREN, Marsh (8); WREN, Carolina (44); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (2); BLUEBIRD, Eastern (49); VEERY (4); THRUSH, Gray-cheeked (2); THRUSH, Swainson's (31); ROBIN, American (26); CATBIRD, Gray (35); THRASHER, Brown (17); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (419); STARLING, European (286); WAXWING, Cedar (33); FINCH, House (10); SPARROW, Lark (1); SPARROW, Seaside (25); SPARROW, Nelson's (2); SPARROW, Savannah (5); MEADOWLARK, Eastern (93); ORIOLE, Orchard (15); ORIOLE, Baltimore (2); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (345); COWBIRD, Bronzed (2); COWBIRD, Brown-headed (50); GRACKLE, Common (192); GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (154); GRACKLE, Great-tailed (506); GRACKLE, Gt./Boat-tailed (113); OVENBIRD (5); WATERTHRUSH, Northern (4); WARBLER, Golden-winged (2); WARBLER, Blue-winged (1); WARBLER, Black-and-white (4); WARBLER, Prothonotary (7); WARBLER, Tennessee (7); WARBLER, Mourning (1); YELLOWTHROAT, Common (40); WARBLER, Hooded (4); REDSTART, American (21); WARBLER, Cape May (1); PARULA, Northern (2); WARBLER, Magnolia (17); WARBLER, Bay-breasted (23); WARBLER, Blackburnian (8); WARBLER, Yellow (13); WARBLER, Chestnut-sided (4); WARBLER, Blackpoll (2); WARBLER, Pine (2); WARBLER, Black-thr. Green (6); TANAGER, Summer (11); TANAGER, Scarlet (6); CARDINAL, Northern (170); GROSBEAK, Rose-breasted (3); GROSBEAK, Blue (3); BUNTING, Indigo (13); BUNTING, Painted (8); DICKCISSEL (296); SPARROW, House (107); TOTAL INDIVIDUALS (11475); TOTAL SPECIES (187); Number of Observers (17); Number of Parties (10-Sep); Number of Party-Hours - Foot (20.2); Number of Party-Hours - Car (41.7); Total Party-hours (62.9); Number of Party-Miles - Foot (8.6); Number of Party-Miles - Car (312.8); Total Party-Miles (321.4); Party Hours Stationary (6.5)

## Bird Sightings – April and May 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:** Since we did not publish a *Brown Pelican* in May, this column covers two months, the two months that represent almost all of the spring Neotropic migration. Because of Covid-19, more attention was paid to birds in back yards, although birding was classified as an essential activity, and, apart from a few closed locations, continued, but with perhaps fewer than normal birders, and very few out of state birders. This applied particularly to the first part of April. Perhaps in response to the lockdown in April, there was unusually heavy birding during the first half of May, and a good number of late migrants were detected.

One noteworthy phenomenon was the large number of reports of Wood Storks in April and on into May. In past years, it was unusual for there to be many Wood Storks before July or August. The conventional wisdom that this was post-breeding dispersal of the birds that nest along the shores of the Bay of Campeche round to the northernmost parts of the Yucatan Peninsula seems to be confirmed by recent more comprehensive coverage in an increasing number of eBird reports. The species is said to nest in late winter and early spring, and the eBird reports suggest that a lot of them subsequently disperse along the coast as far as Texas, but typically not arriving in southeast Texas until August. We do understand that in recent years, the storks have been arriving earlier each year. Looking at eBird maps, which show few storks in Texas before April, and then a relatively compact cluster of sighting in greater Houston (and another in greater Corpus Christi) in April and May, before they are being seen in areas outside these metropolitan areas. We have no obvious explanation of the new found attraction of these to Wood Storks. We await with interest the reports for the rest of the year. .

### Seen in our Core Counties (listed above) – April 2020

Snow Goose	Apr 18	JEF-Hwy 73 at Wilbur Rd (6) Carl Poldrack
Canada Goose	Apr 30	JEF-John Gray Center (4) Charles Fischer
Canvasback	Apr 30	JEF-McFaddin NWR (1 female) Greg Cook
Common Nighthawk	Apr 11	JEF-Texas Pt NR (1) Matt O'Sullivan (early)
Broad-tailed H'bird	Apr 23	ANG-Lufkin (1) Gary Hunter
Roseate Spoonbill	Apr 29	HAI-Silsbee (1) Jana Winberg (unusual inland)
Hairy Woodpecker	Apr 30	ORA-Four Oaks Ranch Rd (1) Greg Cook

Olive-sided Flycatcher	Apr 23	JEF-SW (1) mult obs (early)
	Apr 30	JEF-SW (2) mult obs (early)
Eastern Wood-Pewee	Apr 3	ANG-Lufkin (1) Justin Carpenter
Western Kingbird		
	Apr 12	JEF-Tx87 Sabine Woods to Sea Rim (5) JHH
	Apr 13	JEF-SW (1) Laurie Lawler
	Apr 14	JEF-Old Sabine Cemetery (1) John Berner
	Apr 15	JEF-TX87 at old Willows site (1) JAW
Black Phoebe	Apr 14	ANG-FM-1818 Diboll (2) Laura Wilson
Black-whiskered Vireo	Apr 24	JEF-SW (1) Brandon Nidiffer, mult obs
Lawrence's Warbler	Apr 17	JEF-SW (1) JHH, mult obs
American Redstart	Apr 5	JEF-SW (1 male) JAW
	Apr 7	JEF-SW (2 male) JAW, SH
Cape May Warbler	Apr 12	JEF-SW (1) JHH
	Apr 17	JEF-SW (2 fem) JHH mult obs
	Apr 28-29	JEF-SW (1) JHH, David Moore
Magnolia Warbler	Apr 13	JEF-SW (1) JHH
	Apr 14	JEF-SW (1) Debbie McMullen, mult obs
Yellow Warbler	Apr 10	JEF-Texas Pt NWR (1) Matt O'Sullivan (Unconfirmed)
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	Apr 19-26	JEF-SW (1 male) mult obs
Prairie Warbler	Apr 17	JEF-SW (1 singing) mult obs
Audubon's Warbler	Apr 14	JEF-TX87 at Sea Rim SP (1) John Berner; possible intergrade)
Western Tanager	Apr 19-25	JEF-SW (1 male) Thomas Hellweg, mult obs
Lazuli Bunting	Apr 16	JEF-SW (1) JHH, mult obs

### Seen in our Core Counties (listed above) – May 2020

Gadwall	May 11	JEF-Pleasure Is N Levee (1 male) Greg Jackson
	May 21-29	JEF-TP (1) HS
Baird's Sandpiper	May 9	JEF-TP (3) SH (late)
Bonaparte's Gull	May 9	JEF-SRSP (1) Michael Cooper, Debbie McMullen, Erik Wolf
Brown Booby	May 9	JEF-Pleasure Is N Levee (3) Harlan Stewart, Jana Whittle, Sherrie Roden
Roseate Spoonbill	May 30	HAI-Old Sour Lake Rd (3) Angela and Chris Bailey (Unusual there)
Merlin	May 6	JEF-White Ranch Rd (1) John Berner
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	May 10	JEF-SW (1) JAW (late)
Red Crossbill	May 14	ANG-FS Rd 302A (nr Boykin Springs)(1) Rick Schaefer
Louisiana Waterthrush	May 10	JEF-SW (1) David Moore
Blue-winged Warbler	May 9-10	JEF-SW Mary Ann Beauchemin, mult obs
	May 9	JEF-TP (1) SH
Cape May Warbler	May 9	JEF-SW (1 fem) JHH, mult obs
Canada Warbler	May 17-18	JEF-SW (15) JHH

### Nearby Counties – April 2020

Greater Scaup	Apr 16	CAM-off Peveto Woods (1 fem) David Booth
Lesser Nighthawk	Apr 3-5	GAL-Lafitte's Cove (1) Caleb Gordon, mult obs
Eastern Whip-poor-will	Apr 1	HAS-Kleb Woods (1) Fred Collins
Broad-tailed H'bird	Apr 24-29	HAS-Memorial area (1 fem) Sue Orwig
Rufous Hummingbird	Apr 11	CHA-Baytown (1 ad male) David Hanson
Wood Stork		
	Apr 2	HAS-Pundt Park (6) Brenda Gonzales
	Apr 6	HAS-Mitchell Nature Pres. (4) Joanne Bradberry
	Apr 10	HAS-Gulf Freeway NW of IH610 (6) Kristi Carr
	Apr 14	GAL-Friendswood (6) Dawn Hailey
	Apr 20	HAS-Channelview (43)
	Apr 21	HAS-Greater Heights (42) Caleb Gordon



Apr 21	HAS-Robt C. Stuart Park (1) James Rieman	Palm Warbler	Apr 18	HAS-Exploration Green (1) Liston Rice (late)
Apr 28	HAS-3 mi NW of Cypress (5) April and John Cocanower		Apr 19	HAS-CLC Elementary area (3) Phyllis and Tony Frank
Magnificent Frigatebird	Apr 16 CAM-Holly Beach (1) David Booth		Apr 20	HAS-Exploration Green (1) Tony Frank, Chris Bick
	Apr 28 CAL-Calcasieu Point Landing (1 imm) Dale Hamilton	Prairie Warbler	Apr 3	HAS-Baytown (1) Gene Campbell
Glaucous Gull	Apr 10-13 CAM-Broussard Beach/Willow Is (11) Buford Myers, Tom Finnie, David Booth	Audubon's Warbler	Apr 17	HAS-Bear Creek Park (1) Justin and Lydia Bower
Brown Booby	Apr 1 GAL-West Bay N of Sportsman's Rd (1) continuing bird	Townsend's Warbler	Apr 14	HAS-San Luis Pass (1 male) mult obs
	Apr 24 GAL-Jamaica Beach (1) Dean Silvers	Western Tanager		
Ladder-back. W'dpecker	Apr 16-26 GAL-Lafitte's Cove (1) Kris Cannon, mult obs	Apr 7	GAL-Artist Boat Preserve (1) Greg Hall	
Olive-sided Flycatcher	Apr 29 CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Connie Guillory (early)	Apr 11-13	HAS-nr. Memorial at Gessner (1 imm male) Sandi Templeton	
Eastern Wood-Pewee	Apr 5 HAS-Deerfield Village Greenbelt (1) Margaret and Frank Farese	Apr 21	CAL-Sam Houston SP (1 male) Dale Hamilton	
	Apr 5 HAS-Willow Waterhole Greenspace (1) Ben Hulsey	Apr 26	HAS-Randolph Park (1) Michael Lindsey, Marie Asscherick	
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	Apr 15 GAL-Artist Boat Preserve (1) Greg Hall	Lazuli Bunting	Apr 25	GAL-Lafitte's Cove (1) Kristi Carr
Willow Flycatcher		<b>Nearby Counties – May 2020</b>		
Apr 23	GAL-Lafitte's Cove (1) mult obs (ID by voice)	Snow Goose	May 8	CAM-Cameron Prairie NWR (1) Jim Valenzuela
Apr 24	HAS-Memorial area (1) Sue Orwig (ID by voice)	Ring-necked Duck	May 11	HAS-Seabrook-Back Bay (1) Vernon Fridy
Apr 26	HAS-Tom Bass Regional Park (1) Liston Rice (ID by voice)	Greater Scaup	May 2	GAL-Virginia Pt Campbell Bayou Rd (pvt) (1) James Schubert
Apr 26	GAL-Dos Vacas Muertas (1) Mike Austin (ID by voice)	Surf Scoter	May 18-19	GAL-Bolivar Flats (1 male) Stephen Gast, mult obs
Couch's Kingbird		Sora	May 19	HAS-Geo. Bush Park (2) Letha Slaigle
Apr 1	HAS-Sharp Rd (1) Alec LaVergne	Yellow Rail	May 9	CHA-Oak Is Rd (1) Conner England
Apr 2-23	HAS-Pine Forest Country Club (1) Timothy White	Baird's Sandpiper	May 13	CAL-Hwy 397 (1) David Booth (marginally late)
Apr 13	HAS-Peckham Park (1) Angela and Chris Bailey	American Woodcock	May 16	CHA-Baytown (1) Conner England
Apr 19	HAS-Woodland Park (1) Katherine Crison	Pomarine Jaeger	May 14	GAL-Bolivar Flats (1) mult obs
Apr 25	CHA-Smith Point Robbins Park (1) Gene Campbell	Wilson's Snipe	May 19	GAL-East Beach (1) Kristen Vale
Western Kingbird			May 5	GAL-Bolivar Flats (1) Albert Ribes, Jorge Perez Reyes
Apr 1	HAS-Sharp Rd (1) Alec LaVergne	Glaucous Gull	May 10-14	GAL-Bolivar Flats (1) Leo Miller, Richard Liebler, mult obs
Apr 13	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Dale Hamilton, Judson Lassiter	Wood Stork		
Apr 14	CAL-Lavoi Rd (1) David Booth	May 9	CHA-Oak Is Rd (1) Conner England	
Apr 15	CAM-Le Boeuf Rd (1) Judson Lassiter	May 12	HAS-Seabrook-Back Bay (1) Vernon Fridy	
Apr 15	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) David Booth Dale Hamilton	May 13	HAS-Addicks Res S Levee (8) Sonny Bratz	
Apr 15	LIB-FM686/CR680 Dayton (2) Margaret Taylor, Colette and Paul Micallef	May 25	CHA-ANWR Oyster Bayou Boat Ramp (11) Matthew Griffiths (with photo)	
Fork-tailed Flycatcher	Apr 14 CAL-Fruge Rd (1) (Charlotte Chehotsky, Michael Musumeche)	Masked Booby	May 25	GAL-Brittany Bay Blvd, League City (1 juv) Steven Berenzweig (bird rescued)
Black-capped Vireo	Apr 26 GAL-Kempner Park (1) Bob Becker, mult obs	Brown Booby		
Fish Crow	Apr 1 CHA-Turtle Bayou Nature Preserve (4) Mike Austin, Judy Behrens	May 2	HAS-Baytown Nature Ctr (3) Greg Page	
Winter Wren	Apr 20 HAS-NW Houston (1) Ken Hartman	May 19-26	GAL-West Bay (7) Greg Whittaker, Dean Silvers, Susan Heath, Paul Sivon	
Swainson's Thrush	Apr 3 GAL-HI Boy Scout Woods (1) Houston Audubon	May 29	HAS-Crosby-Lynchburg Ferry (1) Dale Wolck	
	Apr 5 GAL-Lafitte's Cove (1) Kyle O'Haver, Greg Hall	Swallow-tailed Kite	May 2	GAL-Clear Creek Nature Park, League City (1) Michael Pease
Yellow-headed Blackbird	Apr 6 HAS-Paul Rushing Park (1) Michael and Sarah Kuzio		May 2	GAL-Highland Bayou, Hitchcock (1) Allen Hardee
	Apr 20 Exploration Green (1) Tony Frank, Rachael Glazner	Sharp-shinned Hawk	May 21	HAS-Champion Forest Dr nr Hwy99 (1) Jeff Corcoran
Hooded Oriole	Apr 17 GAL-Indian Beach (1) Greg Hall, Richard Liebler		May 22	HAI-Sheldon Lake SP (1) Sonny Bratz
Bullock's Oriole	Apr 19 GAL-League City (1) Geordie Eschenbach	Western Wood-Pewee	May 17	GAL-Corps Woods (1) Allen Hardee
	Apr 29 HAS-Memorial area (1) Linda Kotch	Yellow-bell. Sapsucker	May 1	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) James Cronin, Jimmy Welch
Baltimore Oriole	Apr 5-7 LIB- FM1008 area N of Kenefick (1) Colette Micallef	Hairy Woodpecker	May 23	HAS-Edith Moore (1) Letha Slaigle
Grasshopper Sparrow	Apr 18-19 CAM-Gulf View Rd (nr Peveto Woods) (2) Eamon Corbett, Andre Moncrieff	Peregrine Falcon	May 26	HAS-El Jardin Park/Beach (1) Sonny Bratz
American Redstart	Apr 5 HAS-Jack Drake Park (1) Cameron Kirkpatrick		My 28	HAS-SH-99 Tomball (1) Joy Klumpp
Cape May Warbler	Apr 14 GAL-San Luis Pass (1) mult obs			
Magnolia Warbler	Apr 1 GAL-Lafitte's Cove (1) continuing bird, mult obs			

Olive-sided Flycatcher			Yellow-headed Blackbird	May 9	HAS-CLC Elem (1) Phyllis Frank
May 17	CHA-ANWR exact location not given)	(1) Michelle Romyedy	Hooded Oriole	May 8	HAS-Kingwood (1 fem) Timothy Nichols (no details)
May 18	CHA-ANWR Jackson Woodlot	(1) David Hanson, Kurt Hillman	Baltimore Oriole	May 28	HAS-Baywood Oaks West (1) Tyson Hart
May 30	HAS-Bear Creek Park	(1) Jim Hinson	Louisiana Waterthrush	May 10	GAL-High Is-Boy Scout Woods (1) Mary Ann Beauchemin
Alder Flycatcher	May 17	CHA-ANWR Shoveler Pond (1) Nicole Foley, Tyler Scott (singing)	Blue-winged Warbler	May 17	GAL-Lafitte's Cove (1) Paul Sivon
Ash-throated Flycatcher	May 18	HAS-Pine Gully Park (5) Stennie Meadours, Davis Clay	Cerulean Warbler	May 19	HAS-Eldridge area (1 fem) Ken Hartman
Great Kiskadee	May 18	CHA-ANWR-Jackson Woodlot (1) Gene Campbell	Magnolia Warbler	May 30	HAS-Bunker Hill Village area(1) Ryan Call
	May 30	CHA-McCollum Park, Beach City (1) Paul Fagala	Blackburnian Warbler	May 25	HAS-Braeswood Place (1 male) John O'Brien
Couch's Kingbird	May 2-30	HAS-Pine Forest Country Club (2) Timothy White	Palm Warbler	May 15	GAL-Bermuda Beach (1) Tim Perkins
Blue-headed Vireo			Yellow-rumped Warbler	May 30	HAS-Bear Creek Park (1 Myrtle) Jim Hinson
May 17	CHA-ANWR (exact location not given)	(1) Pam Smolen	Prairie Warbler	May 17	HAS-Edith Moore (1) Jim Hinson
May 18	CHA-ANWR-Jackson Woodlot	(1) David Hanson	Canada Warbler		
May 18	HAS-Memorial area	(1) Aaron Hammer	May 18	CAL-Lake Charles-Tuten Park	(1) Irvin Louque
Philadelphia Vireo	May 25	HAS-Edith Moore Sanctuary (1) Barry Barentine	May 28	HAS-Christa V Adair Park	(1) David Sarkozi
Hooded Crow	May 24	HAS-Seabrook Back Bay (1) Vernon Friday	May 27	HAS-Memorial area east of 610	(1) Ryan Call
Fish Crow	May 4	CHA-IH10 Whites Cemetery Rest Area (1) Nina Rach	May 27	HAS-Memorial area west of 610	(1) Aaron Hammer
	May 6	CHA-Hawk Watch Site (1) John Berner	Wilson's Warbler	May 18	CAL-Lake Charles-Tuten Park (1) Irvin Louque
Red-breasted Nuthatch	May 1	HAS-Bear Creek Park (1) Timothy White	Scarlet Tanager	May 27	HAS-Rice U (1) Cin-Ty Lee (heard only, recorded)
House Wren	May 26	HAS-George Bush Park (1) Timothy White			
Sedge Wren	May 24	GAL-8-mile Rd (1) Mary Anne Weber			
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	May 8-10	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Dale Hamilton, David Booth			
Hermit Thrush	May 2	GAL-Lafitte's Cove (10) Russlyn M			
White-throated Sparrow	May 17	HAS-Seabrook-Back Bay (1) Vernon Fridy			
LeConte's Sparrow	May 1	CAM-Sabine NWR-Blue Goose Trail (1) Timothy Boundy			

**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](http://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.