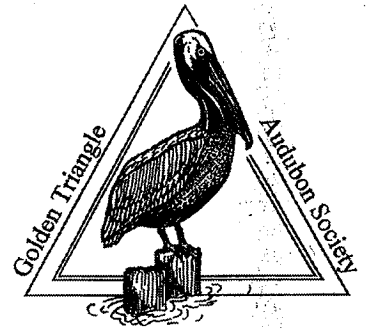


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 27 No. 9

September 2021

Field Trips and Meetings Field Trip to Smith Point Hawk Watch No September Membership Meeting

We very much hoped to be back to a regular schedule of membership meetings by now, but it is not to be. We are making our decisions on a month to month basis and will resume meetings as soon as infections have trended downwards for a period, and we feel that most of you will be comfortable coming.

However, we know a lot of you are anxious to get outdoors and look at birds. Currently, we see no reason why we will not be able to run our September field trip. As is normal in September, this will be to the Hawk Watch at Smith Point on the last Saturday of the month, September 25. If you are yourself concerned to maintaining social distancing, the hawks can be seen almost as well from the parking lot, where there is more than enough room. Full details and directions on page 2.

To the best of our knowledge, the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, which operates the Hawk Watch, has not instituted any access restrictions this year, but in these uncertain times, we cannot guarantee that restrictions will not be instituted, so check the website at www.goldentriangleaudubon.org before setting out.

Birding is an outdoor activity and generally presents much less risk than indoor meetings. Nevertheless, please avoid congregating in large groups. It is recommended that you limit sharing optical equipment. Safely cleaning optical equipment without risking damaging lens coatings is very difficult to do thoroughly.

The Brown Pelican

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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 are subject to last minute changes especially in the current Covid-19 situation. Changes will always be posted on the web site at www.goldentriangleaudubon.org.

Future Programs and Field Trips.

Saturday September 18, 2021. Jefferson County Fall Migration Count. Contact John Whittle at gtaudubon@aol.com for details or to volunteer to help. We will need an experienced birder in each party.

Saturday September 25, 2021. Field Trip to Smith Point Hawk Watch.

.Our leaders will be there from about 8:30 a.m. Hopefully, this will be close to a peak in this year's Broad-winged Hawk migration, but there will always be some hawks. Any day from mid-September through mid or late October should produce a good number of migrating hawks.

To reach the Smith Point Hawk Watch site from Winnie, take Highway 124 south towards High Island. After 12 miles, turn right on FM1985 and follow it about 14 1/2 miles until it meets FM562. Follow FM562 14 miles to Smith Point. Continue straight until almost reaching the bay, and turn left, bearing left again to the parking area next to the Hawk Watch Tower on the Candy Abshier Wildlife Management Area. It takes at least 90 minutes from the Golden Triangle to reach the site. This Field Trip is much more a come and go as you wish trip, and help on hawk identification is always available on the tower during Hawk Watch season!

Our leaders may lead a group into the nearby woods looking for migrants, but you may stay on the tower if you wish. Mosquitoes are not normally a problem on the tower. Availability of food and fuel is essentially non-existent in Smith Point, so bring your lunch!

The Smith Point Hawk Watch is conducted every day from August 15 through the end of October by the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory.

Historically, the peak of Broad-wing Hawk migration was September 25, although in recent years at Smith Point, it has tended to be later and less

uniform, and sometimes large numbers of Broad-wings have passed through in the first few days of October. Should a cold front pass through, the days immediately following usually have a north wind, and more migrating hawks of all species on those days.

Previous years' results are at <http://hawkcount.org>, so you can do your own analysis! The exact peak day probably depends more on the weather on the migration path from Pennsylvania down to east Texas, and particularly on the two or three days prior. However, almost all migratory hawks are coming from areas further north although Broad-wings breed over almost all of the eastern half of the United States, including the Golden Triangle, a large percentage are coming from the southern tier of Canada, even as far west as British Columbia.

Should a cold front pass through, the days immediately following usually have a north wind, and there tend to be more migrating hawks of all species on those days. For more information, contact Field Trip Chair Steve Mayes (gtaudubon@aol.com).

Saturday October 2, 2021. Sabine Woods Work Day. We plan to do our usual fall routine maintenance. We will be there from about 7:30 a.m. Normally, we work until about noon. We will supply cold water and soft drinks and hope to be able to provide sandwiches for lunch.

We have a limited number of hand tools but if you have loppers or clippers, please bring them. If you have a heavy duty riding mower and the means to transport it, please let us know in advance so we can coordinate. We may need a chain saw, but probably only one. Bring insect repellent!

For more details, contact John Whittle at gtaudubon@aol.com



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

Saturday October 21, 2021. (Tentative.) Field Trip to Sabine Woods. Leader Steve Mayes. Meet at Sabine Woods, which is 4.1 miles west of Sabine Pass on the north side of Highway 87. Meet at 7:30 a.m. or join the trip in progress in the woods later. Waterproof footwear will probably be a good idea. Bring mosquito repellent just in case. There are few services available on weekends in Sabine Pass, and no gasoline is available. Bring drinks.

October 21 is towards the end of fall songbird migration, but often brings a good variety of birds. A cold front may drive down the last of the warblers and the first big push of wintering birds. Some of our winter birds may be arriving, and often the woodland species that winter in the Big Thicket overshoot a little at first. There are always interesting birds at Sabine Woods! Birding Sabine Woods is relatively easy walking.

Thursday October 21, 2021. Membership Meeting. If we are able to hold this meeting, it will probably be a program on a trip to Minnesota by Dana Nelson and Harlan Stewart

Thursday November 18, 2020. Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting of Golden Triangle Audubon Society will take place on November 18, 2021 in the Garden Center, Tyrrell Park. At this meeting, we will hold elections for all Officer and At-Large Board positions. To contact the Nominating Committee or to nominate someone, please in the first instance email gtaudubon@aol.com

Camera Auction

The auction of the camera and lens described in last month's issue has been postponed until we are able to hold in-person Membership Meetings.

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 2022 dues. Please use the subscription/membership blank on the back page.

The memberships of new members joining in August or later in the year will extend to the end of the following calendar year. As a reminder, dues are voluntary for National Audubon Society (NAS) members living in the Chapter's official territory, which is defined by zip codes, but basically covers all of Jefferson, Orange and Hardin Counties and one or two zip codes adjacent to these counties. We would very much encourage you receive the Brown Pelican electronically. To start that, simply send an email to gtaudubon@aol.com from the address you want us to use.

Smith Point Hawkwatch

(from Golden Triangle Audubon Facebook)

The Gulf Coast Bird Observatory sponsors this hawk watch and we truly appreciate it. If you have time during this three and a half month period, it is always fun to go to this hawk watch. Please remember there is no gas station in town or stores in Smith Point, so be prepared. Here are the coordinates for the hawk watch : 29°31'34.22"N 94°45'57.31"W

Smith Point Hawk Watch started August 15! Stop by the tower any day from now to November 30 from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm to see who's flying by. This is the Smith Point Hawk Watch's 25th year! That's 25 years of important research on migration, population health, species diversity and more. We're excited to get out there again this fall! Below is a list of total hawks seen each year at Smith Point Hawk Watch:

1997 - 42,993	2009 - 94,553
1998 - 25,824	2010 - 24,988
1999 - 47,337	2011 - 62,163
2000 - 40,766	2012 - 67,369
2001 - 117,517	2013 - 42,915
2002 - 80,984	2014 - 111,411
2003 - 31,885	2015 - 30,065
2004 - 39,658	2016 - 54,013
2005 - 35,568	2017 - 56,546
2006 - 58,010	2018 - 72,263
2007 - 33,520	2019 - 26,764
2008 - 3,313 (Hurricane Ike)	2020 - 69,253

Total after 24 years of counting hawks at Smith Point -- 1,269,678

For people who are trying to figure out which days tend to have the biggest movements of hawks over Smith Point, I looked up info and these were the days that had the largest numbers seen:

Some of the highest hawk watch days at Smith Point:

9-20-1999 = 13,928	9-20-2011 = 11,284
9-16-2000 = 18,537	10-2-2012 = 12,405
9-25-2001 = 50,445	10-19-2014 = 24,123
9-24-2002 = 17,402	10-18-2014 = 26,613
9-25-2006 = 28,410	9-18-2018 = 15,566
9-26-2007 = 19,284	9-29-2020 = 23,184

Jana Whittle

A significant number of Hawkwatches are conducted throughout the US, especially in the Northeast. The hawks are counted as they pass through New England and especially through Pennsylvania, and on down the Appalachians until they approach the Gulf Coast. Others come from Canada through a bottleneck in the Detroit area. Hawks do not fly across water! By the time they reach our area with the Gulf of Mexico to their south, they are flying west to turn south round the coastal bend of Texas and eventually through another bottleneck in Veracruz, Mexico where the gap between the mountains and the Gulf narrows.

Strangely enough there are essentially no hawkwatches conducted between Pennsylvania and our area, so we have no warning of approaching flights!

The Birdlife of Southeast Texas in Oberholser – Part 2

by Steve Mayes

Welcome to part two of my articles on content of local interest from *Oberholser's Bird Life of Texas*! This is a rich resource for all species of birds known to have occurred in the state up to the early 1970's. Plus, it is fascinating to read the old accounts for some of these species that may no longer occur in the area. We left off with Limpkin last time and will continue with the waterbirds or at least some shorebirds.

The Eskimo Curlew once likely occurred in the area. This bird was formerly quite abundant and moved through Texas in the spring headed for their arctic breeding grounds. The Curlews moved mostly through the center part of the state, traveling through the grasslands while eating grasshoppers and other prey but certainly occurred on the coast as well. Oberholser does not specifically list any specimens or sightings from the Golden Triangle area but it had to occur here at one point. Unfortunately, over hunting and possibly the extinction of a particular grasshopper that it preyed on (from pesticides), wiped out this once abundant bird. The last definitive sighting in the United States was off 7 Mile Road in Galveston on April 15, 1962 when the famous photographs of the bird were taken by Don Bleitz. There was a bird killed in 1963 in Barbados and there have been a few reported sightings since then but no definitive records. Though a few optimists still hold out some hope, it is all but certain that this little shorebird is gone forever.

American Woodcock is a species that still occurs in the area most winters. Some winters it is very common and others, it is virtually absent. It is not, however, known to breed locally. Oberholser notes a nest with two young birds discovered north of Sour Lake on March 22, 1905. It may be possible that this species still breeds in some isolated area of Hardin County today as I know it does still breed elsewhere in east Texas. Still, I am not aware of any recent summer records from our area.

One of the most famous and tragic stories in American Ornithology is that of the Passenger Pigeon. Once numbering in the billions with flocks that would darken the skies for days there are none left today. Over hunting and habitat destruction wiped out the most numerous bird species in the world with the last known bird dying in the Cincinnati Zoo in 1914. The species did occur in southeast Texas as a wintering bird though numbers apparently varied greatly from year to year. The birds would arrive in east Texas in the fall in large numbers. There are sightings of birds from Jefferson County though the dates are not clear and early settlers reported "great numbers" of pigeons 4.5 miles southeast of Kountze – possibly near the current location of the Roy E. Larsen Sandylands Sanctuary. The largest Texas roost was more than one thousand acres, containing an estimated 15 million birds, and was located near Athens in northeast Texas. It is reported that the settlers would hunt them by night and bring them home by the sack full. It apparently sounded like a small battle each night with all of the shotgun blasts. Those without shotguns used long poles to knock the birds out of the trees. The unrestrained hunting combined with the cutting of the hardwood forests in east Texas and the drowning of other bottomlands with dam building doomed the Texas population as similar issues eradicated the species in other states. The last large flight of Passenger Pigeons

in Texas was the in the winter of 1881/1882. The last known Passenger Pigeons in Texas were two killed near upper Galveston Bay in March of 1900.

Perhaps the other most famous extinct North American bird is the Carolina Parakeet. The only widespread, native parrot in North America was unfortunately wiped out by human activities. The last known Carolina Parakeet died in 1918 in the same zoo in Cincinnati as the last Passenger Pigeon. The Carolina Parakeet probably bred in small numbers in northeast Texas but was mostly a wintering bird in Texas. It was reported as common in the fall in Jasper and Jefferson Counties with flocks of "20 – 30 birds" prior to 1870. Unfortunately, the bird was seen as a crop pest in some parts of the country and was persecuted for its feathers and for the pet trade. Add in the destruction of the eastern hardwood forests on which it depended and competition for nest sites with European Honey Bees and introduced bird species and this colorful species slowly faded away. The last known Carolina Parakeet in Texas was one killed in Bowie County around 1897.

Greater Roadrunners still occur in Hardin County though they are not common there. This ground-dwelling cuckoo probably occurred, at least occasionally, in Jefferson County into the 1980's but there are no recent records. Oberholser lists it as a breeding bird for Jefferson County and it probably was at one time. Could the species still occur here? I would suggest spending a lot of time along Pine Island Bayou and checking the areas north of Nome and in Bevil Oaks and you might get lucky!

Oberholser also lists hypothetical sightings of another cuckoo – Smooth-billed Ani. Sight records of this tropical species are listed from February 17 and April 1, 1939 from Pine Island Bayou north of Beaumont. Although this species does still occur in Florida, bird records from recent decades indicate that the records in Oberholser almost certainly actually represent the more common Groove-billed Ani. But who knows? The two can be difficult to tell apart and stranger species have shown up!

Owls are always popular with birders and for good reason. These are charismatic birds that are not always easy to see given their nocturnal habits. There are a few interesting owl records listed by Oberholser for our area. The first is the most spectacular: Snowy Owl! Oberholser lists a Snowy Owl specimen taken from Port Arthur around March 31, 1936. What has become of this specimen is unclear but that would certainly be an unexpected spring sighting! Oberholser also mentions a specimen for Long-eared Owl taken in Orange County. There are no recent Orange County records that I am aware of but given its recent occasional appearances in Jefferson County, this does not seem too unexpected. He also lists a possibly road-killed Northern Saw-whet Owl specimen from Liberty County near Dayton from December 22, 1951. This is a small, quiet, unobtrusive species that likes to be in dense woods so it could be easily overlooked. It is a species that could possibly turn up in east Texas – if you can find it!

Another expected species for southeast Texas would be Vaux's Swift. This species is very difficult to separate from

the common Chimney Swift in the field but has been verified with specimens from Louisiana numerous times. There are no verified records for anywhere in Texas but it almost certainly occurs. Oberholser records sight records of Vaux's Swift from Jefferson County from the winters of 1926, '27, '33, '36, '37 and 1940! Since any swift in the winter would be unusual, it is very possible that these were correct identifications. Unfortunately, with no specimens, photos or recordings, these remain hypothetical records.

Red-cockaded Woodpeckers are known to have occurred in Hardin County into at least the 1980's and Oberholser lists the species as breeding there which is not surprising. That he also lists Red-cockaded Woodpecker as a breeding bird for Jefferson County is slightly more surprising. No dates are given but there was probably at least some suitable habitat in northern Jefferson County at one time. A small population of these picky woodpeckers probably could have existed but they were likely never common here.

One of the most well known of species that formerly occurred in this area is the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. This was one of the largest woodpecker species in the world and haunted bottomland forests throughout the southeastern United States at

one time. It was once fairly common in east Texas and likely in our area as well. As with so many other species, habitat destruction spelled the end for this big, charismatic woodpecker. Definitive records for our area include breeding birds in Jasper County on May 3, 1885 and a sight record from noted researcher John Dennis near Evadale in 1966. The bird was reported in Tyler County on April 14, 1929. Male and female birds were reported from Hardin County near the confluence of Village Creek and the Neches River on November 1, 1933. Orange County recorded the species in 1938. The species was reported in Jefferson County from May 19, 1937 and again in 1938. The last specimens from Texas were taken six miles east of Tarkington in Liberty County on November 26, 1904. Though diehards still insist the species survives in deep east Texas and Louisiana, repeated trips and expeditions in these areas by amateurs and professionals alike have failed to produce a single verifiable record. It seems likely this species, like the Eskimo Curlew, Passenger Pigeon and Carolina Parakeet, did not survive into the twenty first century.

Well, this was the most depressing installment of the Oberholser articles! There will be one more installment that, I promise, will not include any more extinctions!

Field Trip to Bolivar Flats – 21 August 2021

The traditional August field trip to Bolivar Flats is always a good choice for the time of year. Not only are there lots of birds but there are no bugs and there is usually a breeze! A good combination for birding in southeast Texas in the summer. And the wide-open spaces are perfect for pandemic birding! Easy social distancing! But, of course, the birds are what people really come for and they are the reason for the Golden Triangle Audubon Society's annual August field trip to this sanctuary.

The birds started on Rettillon Road before the birders even reached the flats. Numerous "peeps" (mostly Least Sandpipers) fed in a wet area along with Black-necked Stilts, an American Avocet, Killdeer and some other nice birds. Pulling onto the flats, Laughing Gulls and a Long-billed Curlew were quickly picked up before the group even parked. A Ring-billed Gull was a nice addition though there is usually at least one present here even in the summer. The beach was quite busy with people but, luckily, the shorebird sanctuary has a barrier designed to prevent vehicles from getting in. Though you still get fisherman scaring up the birds sometimes, it is still the best birding beach on the upper Texas coast. A couple of photographers were walking off the flats and told the group that there was not much out there but the birders pressed on, determined to find out for themselves.

Sanderlings were among the most common bird on the beach that day as is usual. The group searched through them looking for the Red Knots but could never locate one. Western and Least Sandpipers were easy to locate but Semipalmated Sandpipers proved elusive. Colorful Ruddy Turnstones were plentiful and noisy Willets were easy to find. The small plovers were all well represented. Piping was the first to seen and at least one banded bird was seen. Larger Wilson's Plovers were located next. These are the local breeding plovers and will likely be leaving soon for their wintering grounds. Snowy Plovers were also picked out and there turned out to be quite a

few of them hiding in low spots in the sand and behind debris. Darker backed Semipalmated Plovers were more common closer to the water than the other small plovers. In addition to the small plovers, large Black-bellied Plovers were also seen. Individuals were found both in their drab, gray winter plumage and in their black-bellied breeding plumage. The group looked to see if there were any American Golden-Plovers around (not usually a beach bird but it happens) but came up empty. A Spotted Sandpiper was seen by some of the birders near the vegetation line and Marbled Godwits gave good looks at their long, bicolored bills.

Royal Terns were the most numerous around on the flats but a larger Caspian Tern or two were eventually located. Sandwich Terns with their yellow-tipped bills were fairly easy to locate while Forster's Terns were not at all common on the day. A few Black Terns were loafing on the beach all having lost much of their black plumage already. Least Terns were still pretty common on the flats and the group even found a couple of young ones that were not yet able to fly being fed by their parents. A single large Herring Gull was seen and a few Black Skimmers were seen near the water – always a welcome sight! A single Magnificent Frigatebird was spotted soaring in the distance.

Reddish Egrets were quite common on the day as they waded and hunted in the shallows. Most of these birds were the usual dark morph type but there was at least one white morph present on the day. This form of the Reddish Egret is more common as one goes south toward south Texas. A few Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were present, mostly young birds. They seemed to be hunting crabs and were having some success, swallowing the crustaceans whole! Huge Brown Pelicans were common on the day as expected. It is amazing that these birds were practically wiped out of Texas just fifty years ago. Bolivar Flats is the best local area to find Horned Larks so that is always

a target bird got the GTAS group. They were quite easy to see on this trip, appearing out on the beach and not just among the vegetation along the dunes as they usually do. A couple of Crested Caracaras were flushed from the beach, disturbing their scavenging no doubt. Overall, not a bad list for a spot we were told not to bother with!

After a lunch spot, the birders made a quick stop at Bob Road. This spot netted Osprey, Belted Kingfisher, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher and Seaside Sparrow for at least some of the birders. From there, it was on to Rollover Pass. This is a well-known birding location that has changed drastically in recent months. Formerly a cut through the land from the gulf to Galveston Bay, the cut was now completely filled. Still, there were birds around though not as many as usual. Was this because of the changes or just because of the high tide? Time will tell. In the mean-time, the group enjoyed killer, up close looks at Black Skimmers and American Oystercatchers. These are both black and white birds with colorful bills and they made the photographers in the group very happy! One of the Oystercatchers was banded, likely by Sue Heath and her group from the nests in the Galveston Bay area. The Oystercatchers were interacting quite a bit and seemed to be doing some displays to each other. It was quite something to see and provided a nice show for the birders.

From the beach, a few of the remaining birders travelled on to the Houston Audubon's Smith Oaks Sanctuary. The birders checked the heron rookery and the area for migrants. The rookery had good numbers of Cattle, Great and Snowy Egrets along with numerous Tricolored Herons and at least one Little Blue Heron. Neotropic Cormorants were common and a couple of Roseate Spoonbills were also found. There were still plenty of young birds around the nests and lots of activity. Prothonotary Warbler and Yellow Warbler were quickly spotted along the trail to the rookery and a couple of Black and White Warblers were eventually found not too far away.

Carolina Wrens were heard all around but few were seen. A young Yellow-billed Cuckoo was pulling web worms out of their webs while a Broad-winged Hawk soared overhead. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and Northern Cardinals were seen and heard and Anhinga was a good addition to the day list.

Overall, it was another great trip for the Golden Triangle Audubon Society. A chance to see a lot of great birds and just get out and forget the world's problems for a little while. Hopefully, things will get a little better before the group's next field trip: the September pilgrimage to Smith Point for the Hawk Watch!

The following species were recorded by the trip leaders:

Brown Pelican; Magnificent Frigatebird; Anhinga; Neotropic Cormorant; Great Blue Heron; Great Egret; Snowy Egret; Little Blue Heron; Tricolored Heron; Reddish Egret; Cattle Egret; Green Heron; Yellow-crowned Night-Heron; White Ibis; Roseate Spoonbill; Black Vulture; Turkey Vulture; Osprey; Broad-winged Hawk; Common Gallinule; Black-bellied Plover; Snowy Plover; Wilson's Plover; Semipalmated Plover; Piping Plover; Killdeer; Spotted Sandpiper; Ruddy Turnstone; Sanderling; Western Sandpiper; Least Sandpiper; Marbled Godwit; Dowitcher sp.; Lesser Yellowlegs; Willet; Long-billed Curlew; Black-necked Stilt; American Avocet; American Oystercatcher; Laughing Gull; Ring-billed Gull; Herring Gull; Royal Tern; Sandwich Tern; Caspian Tern; Forster's Tern; Least Tern; Black Tern; Black Skimmer; Rock Pigeon; Mourning Dove; Yellow-billed Cuckoo; Common Nighthawk; Belted Kingfisher; Crested Caracara; Eastern Kingbird; Scissor-tailed Flycatcher; Loggerhead Shrike; Blue Jay; Barn Swallow; Carolina Chickadee; Carolina Wren; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher; Northern Mockingbird; European Starling; Horned Lark; Prothonotary Warbler; Yellow Warbler; Black and White Warbler; Seaside Sparrow; Northern Cardinal; Red-winged Blackbird; Eastern Meadowlark; Boat-tailed Grackle; Great-tailed Grackle; House Sparrow. *Steve Mayes*

Corpus Christi Hawkwatch

(from Golden Triangle Audubon Facebook)

August 1st is when the Corpus Christi Hawkwatch starts. On the first day, right after 1:00, they had their first Swallow-tailed Kite fly over. As many of you know, this is the largest hawk watch in North America. There is a really nice tower for people to watch from except for last year because of Covid-19. You could still watch from your car then. Several years they have seen more than one million hawks fly over during the three months that paid hawk watchers are there. It is a four and a half hour drive from Beaumont to Corpus.

The prime time to see more hawks normally is between September 15th and 30th. That is when we have seen the most. As I look of the data from last year, I noticed that there were 84,000 Broad-winged Hawks on Sept. 28th that flew over the hawkwatch tower. We were there many years ago and saw over 300,000 hawks in one day. There have been other years when they have seen 500,000 hawks seen in one day. And yes, there are slow days too, but it is fun!

The hawk watch is located in Hazel Bazemore Park which is also a very good park to find lots of interesting other bird species. I am including the link which has lots of info about the watch. The neat thing about bird watching is that you can space out when you are outdoors. Daily hawk counts can be accessed at <https://hawkwatch.org/corpus>.

Jana Whittle

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds

(from Golden Triangle Facebook)

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have really started coming through our area. On August 20th we had seven hummers. The more feeders that you put out, often increases the number of hummingbirds that you can see at one time. If you put them a few feet away from each other, that helps too. During the middle of September, a lady who lived in Groves (Billie Smith) would often have at least 200 hummingbirds each day. She had at least six feeders on her back porch and two on her front porch. You have to clean them every two days in this heat though. As the days get cooler, you might can go three days without changing them. Please use one part of sugar to four parts of water. You can boil the water if you would like, but you can also use warm tap water. Just make sure to let it cool before putting your feeders outside. I do not fill my feeders to the top because I change them often. If you like to take photos of hummingbirds, please be sure that the hummingbird feeders that you use have perches on it. I have bought them that looked like there were perches, but when I opened the box, there were none.

Jana Whittle

Bird Sightings – August 2021

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: We go from feast to famine! For two or three months, we have had many reports of migrant species that ordinarily breed well north of the Golden Triangle being seen in the area in the summer months. Now we reach August, on the cusp of the normal fall migration windows for many of the neotropical migrant species, and although many are somewhat early, they have been reported in August in prior years often enough to be considered only uncommon. So there are relatively few that meet our criteria for inclusion here. Two sort of interrelated factors may be at work here.

One is that birds whose first breeding attempt failed when

there is not time for a second attempt, or when conditions (food availability or too much or too little water) were not suitable will often head back early to their wintering grounds, which are their ancestral homes in any case. Their drive to come north was to breed, and when that did not succeed, they head back "home." This behavior is most noticeable in shorebirds, but the picture there is complicated by the tendency of first year birds, not yet mature enough to breed, to remain in their wintering grounds, which often include the local area. This does not seem to happen as much with passerine migrants, or for that matter, with ducks or hawks.

A second factor may be that the amount of birding activity over the years during late June and July especially has been very limited, and the available records from past years may not be reflective of actual occurrences.

Two series of sightings are worthy of note this month. Limpkins are now clearly resident at Sheldon Lake in addition to in the Brazos Bend area (just outside the area we cover). Other sightings suggest they may also be resident in other locations yet to be discovered. In a month of two, we may have more information and be able to understand why the species has made a long distance range expansion.

The second is the clear evidence that a pair of Tropical Kingbirds fledged two young along the highway just east of Sabine Woods.

Seen in our Core Counties (listed above)

August 2021

Rufous Hummingbird	Aug 4	ANG-Lufkin (1) Gary Hunter
	Aug 19-26	JEF-Nederland (1 male) HS
Tropical Kingbird	Aug 8-31	JEF-TX87 E of Sabine Woods to Old Cemetery (4) Timothy Freiday mult obs
Peregrine Falcon	Aug 30	ANG-Lufkin (1) Gary Hunter
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Aug 14	TYL-Martin Dies SP Cherokee Unit (1) Phillip Hight
Worm-eating Warbler	Aug 20	JEF-SW (1) Timothy Freiday
	Aug 22	JEF-SW (1) SH, SM
	Aug 29	JEF-SW (1) SM
Cerulean Warbler	Aug 19	JEF-SW (1 fem/imm) Ashley Fuselier, JHH, JAW

Nearby Counties

August 2021

Cinnamon Teal	Aug 28	CHA-ANWR Shoveler Pond area (1) Scott Atkinson
Limpkin	Aug 1-30	HAS-Sheldon Lake SP (2) mult obs
	Aug 28	LIB-1 mi N of Oldriver-Winfree Gary and Lisa Holmes
	Aug 28	LIB-Champion Lake (1) Margaret Taylor, Shellie Ellerbe, Gary Holmes, Carl Poldrack mult obs
Brown Booby	Aug 17, 30	HAS-Baytown NC (2) Ray Porter, mult obs
American Bittern	Aug 7	CHA-ANWR (exact location not specified) (1) Dwayne Litteer
White-tailed Hawk	Aug 2-15	CAL-Tom Segal Rd area (1) Kirsten Livingston, mult obs

Golden-front. W'pecker	Aug 11	HAS-Kleb Woods (1) Greg Duncan, Ted Zobeck
Ladder-back. W'pecker	Aug 16	HAS-Kleb Woods (1) Ardell Winters
Alder Flycatcher	Aug 3	CAL-Lake Charles (1) David Booth, James Smithers (recorded)
Willow Flycatcher	Aug 3	CAL-Lake Charles (1) David Booth, James Smithers (recorded)
Empidonax sp.	Aug 4	GAL-Corps Woods (1)
Great Kiskadee	Aug 12	CAL- Lake Charles (1) Cyndi Simon
Bell's Vireo	Aug 7-10	CAL-Traub Rd (1) James Smithers, Charlotte Chehotsky, mult obs
Sedge Wren	Aug 28	CHA-ANWR Shoveler Pond (1) Scott Atkinson
American Goldfinch	Aug 21	HAS-Buffalo Bayou Park (10) Noelle Purcell
Tennessee Warbler	Aug 19	HAS-Morgan's Pt (1) Brian Young
Magnolia Warbler	Aug 19	HAS-Bear Creek OPark (1) Scott Atkinson
Wilson's Warbler	Aug 21	Has-Rice U Campus (1) Cin-Ty Lee

Abbreviations used: ANG – Angelina County; ANWR – Anahuac NWR; 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;; 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.