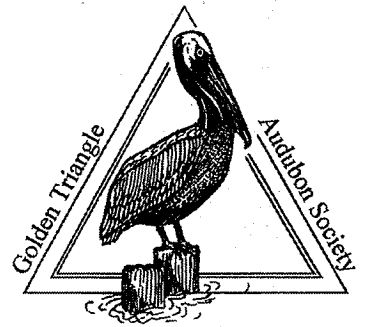


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 27 No 11

November 2021

**Annual Meeting and Elections
Thursday November 18, 2021 7:00 p.m.
Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont**

**Gulf Coast Birding Observatory and its Programs
Martin Hagne, Executive Director**

Martin Hagne was born and raised on the Swedish west coast, where his grandfather instilled a love for nature at an early age. He moved to the United States, and the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, in 1979 and turned his focus towards wildlife viewing and conservation concerns

Martin served as the Executive Director of the Valley Nature Center in Weslaco, Texas, an environmental education facility, for 13 years. He then moved to Bandera, Texas where he led the Flying L Resort and Conference Center. He has also worked as a Field Biologist doing baseline studies for many years, including avian, herp, mammal, T&E, and habitat studies.

He enjoys leading birding field trips in the US and Mexico and has served on several state, regional and local environmental appointments, committees, and boards. Birding, nature viewing, native plants, conservation issues and environmental education are his great passions.

Prominent among GCBO's local projects are the Smith Point Hawk Watch, a color banding of American Oystercatchers project, a project studying Black Skimmers, and a project studying the decline in Loggerhead Shrike populations.

This is our annual pot luck dinner meeting. We invite you, if you are able, to bring a dish or a dessert to share. We will also be conducting our annual elections at this meeting. We will plan on having the doors open by 6:00 p.m. and the meeting will start at 7:00 p.m. sharp.

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Issue number 277

Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Web Site for more information
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

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Calendar of Events

Important Note: Field Trip and other notices published here are subject to last minute changes especially in the current Covid-19 environment. Changes will always be posted on www.goldentriangleaudubon.org so check the web site before setting out.

Future Programs and Field Trips.

Thursday November 18, 2021. 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. This is also our Pot-luck dinner Meeting, resuming a tradition interrupted for the past two years by weather events and Covid. See page 1 for details of the program to follow the elections.

Saturday November 20, 2021. Field Trip to West Jefferson County. In recent years, this has been one of our most successful field trips. The area is well known for its birds of prey, which in past years have included Bald and Golden Eagles, Crested Caracaras and White-tailed Hawks in addition to the more "expected" Red-tailed Hawks, Northern Harriers, and American Kestrels. In some years we have seen White-tailed Kites and Merlins.

The area is well known as the wintering ground of what has become a large (about 1,000 strong) flock of Sandhill Cranes and is also one of the best places to see sparrows in the area. However, on the other hand, there is considerable concern over the apparent declines in populations of many passerine species in West Jefferson County.

Depending on whether there are flooded fields, there may be ducks and geese also.

Meet at 8 a.m. at the intersection of FM365 and Johnson Road (on the "north/west" side of Johnson Road at that intersection). From the intersection of Interstate 10 and FM365 in Fannett,

proceed along FM365 (towards Nome) for about six miles. Shortly after you emerge out of the woodlands, South China Road goes to the right (east then north) and immediately afterwards, on the left, is Johnson Road. Contact Field Trip chair Steve Mayes, gtaudubon@aol.com for further information. This will be largely a "car birding" trip, car pooling desired.

Christmas Bird Counts

A more comprehensive list of local counts will be included in the December issue. Here are the dates of counts that we know of.

Johnson Bayou, LA -- Tuesday Dec 14
Bolivar Peninsula -- Thursday Dec 16
Turkey Creek -- Saturday Dec 18
Beech Creek -- Tuesday Dec 21
Sea Rim SP CBC -- TBA, almost certainly after Christmas.

Houston Audubon maintains a list of Texas Christmas Count dates at https://houstonaudubon.org/birding/christmas-bird-counts/upper-texas-coast.html#content_7d075c0996b33675f38486f0ea285e62_item_7894806

Thursday January 20, 2022. Membership Meeting; Ann Kovich on a birding trip to Peru.

Thursday February 17, 2022. Membership Meeting. Program on bees by Len Van Marion

Selection of the location of the January and later Field Trips will be made later. As this is being written, very few wintering birds have arrived, and we want to be able to take advantage of any location that offers good viewing opportunities for wintering species.



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

Silent Auction of Cannon Camera and Lens

Canon EOS-1DX Mark II approx. 10,000 shutter clicks, no charger or case;
 Canon EF 400mm f 4 DO IS II USM lens and Canon EF 1:4 Extender no case.
 Minimum Bid: \$7,000

Golden Triangle Audubon has a Cannon Camera and Lens available for sale as a package with proceeds to be dedicated for use at Sabine Woods. We will conduct a silent auction closing at the end of our November 18 Membership Meeting. The camera and lens are in excellent exterior condition, with no signs of wear, and appear to us to be in good working order. However, they are offered "as is" with no warranty. Pictures taken with the system will be available.

The camera and lens will be available for inspection in the period before the November 18 Golden Triangle Audubon meeting. Bids will close at the end of the November meeting, and the winning bidder will be notified as soon as possible thereafter. Payment by cashier's check or ACH transfer to our account at Education First FCU within seven days of notification. Buyer picks up or supplies cases for shipment and pays for shipping and insurance, FedEx or UPS only. If buyer defaults, camera and lens will be offered to next highest bidder.

Bids will be public during the auction, although the bidder's contact information will not. Bids may be made in person, or may be emailed to gtaudubon@aol.org. If no one is readily available to receive your bid during the meeting, place your bid and name on the card provided and your contact information (phone number or email address) in a sealed envelope,

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. You may pay at any membership meeting (checks preferred) or use the subscription/ membership blank on the back page.

For new members joining National Audubon on line and selecting our Chapter code (W25), we receive a rebate of the entire first year's national dues, and no Chapter dues are not expected for that first 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 do also welcome NAS members in other nearby counties although their membership in NAS does not automatically bring them to our attention.

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.

Bird Sightings – October 2021

(continued from page 7)

Eastern Kingbird	Oct 3	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Erik Johnson, Justin Bosler
Bell's Vireo	Oct 2-3	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Paul Conover, mult obs
Yellow-throated Vireo	Oct 25	HAS-Glenbrook Valley (1) James Rieman
	Oct 26	HAS-Champion Forest (1) Ross Silcock
Philadelphia Vireo	Oct 25	HAS-Robt C Stuart park (1) James Rieman
Red-eyed Vireo	Oct 26	HAS- Champion Forest (1) Ross Silcock
Cave Swallow	Oct 24	CAL-Corbina Rd (2) Charlotte Chehotsky
	Oct 29	CAM-Peveto Woods (2) Jay Huner
	Oct 29	CAM-Fruge Rd S of LA14 (1) Garrett Rhyme, Nick Ramsey, Matthew Janson
Swainson's Thrush	Oct 31	CAM-Willow Island (1) Jay Huner
Hermit Thrush	Oct 17	CAM-Willow Island (1) Van Remsen
American Goldfinch	Oct 10	HAS-Bear Creek Park (1) Cin-Ty Lee, Jonathan Taffet
Chipping Sparrow	Oct 17	CAM-Willow Is (1) Van Remsen
Clay-colored Sparrow	Oct 13-14	CAL-Tom Segal Rd (2) Charlotte Chehotsky, James Smithers
	Oct 14	CAL-Corbina Rd (1) David Booth
	Oct 29	CAM-Lacassine Wildlife Loop (1) Michael Good
Eastern Towhee	Oct 20	HAS-Houston Arboretum (1) Kelsey Low
MacGillivray's Warbler	Oct 18-19	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Dan Lane, Van Remsen, Philip Whitlow
Northern Parula	Oct 30	HAS-Glenbrook Valley-Sims Bayou (1) James Rieman
	Oct 31	CAL-Holbrook Park Area (1) James Smithers
	Oct 31	HAS-Memorial Area (1) Sue Orwig
Prairie Warbler	Oct 9-31	HAS-Bear Creek Park (1) Jim Hinson, Drew Dickert, mult obs
	Oct 22,30	CHA-ANWR-Skillern Tract (1) Sonny Bratz
Golden crowned Warbler	Oct 3-4	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Charlei Lyon, Rosemary Seidler, Paul Conover, mult obs
Western Tanager	Oct 4-5	GAL-Lafitte's Cove (1) Richard Liebler, Robert Becker, Paul Sivon
	Oct 30-31	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) James Smithers, Holly Morales, mult obs

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.

Fall Migration Count – 18 September 2021

It seems that in reporting on the Fall Migration Count, the first things that have to be discussed are the tropical weather events during the first half of September. This is perhaps not surprising since the occurrence of tropical storms and hurricanes in the Atlantic basin peak around the 10th of the month. This year's event was Hurricane Nicholas, which made landfall as a minimal Category 1 hurricane late on September 13 local time. It hugged the coast, rapidly weakening as it approached Jefferson County and then moved on into Louisiana. Rainfall amounts by local standards were comparatively modest, although storm surge rendered the east beach at Sea Rim State Park inaccessible by vehicle again. However, that was essentially the only weather related issue affecting this year's count.

The migration count is timed to catch migrants, and is too early to give any real insight into wintering populations. But there is some preliminary evidence in the numbers that the extreme freeze in February this year may have affected the population of some year round residents. The very direct effect of birds succumbing during the freeze is only part of the story. Birds are, more than any other class of creature, able to move even long distances to mitigate the indirect effects. Starting at the bottom of the food chain, insect populations were likely severely affected by the freeze. Couple that with hangover issues from several recent Falls when rain events may have scoured the ground and washed away insect eggs and larvae, insect populations may have been severely reduced. Plant foliage and seeds may also have been reduced. This affects those next higher on the food chain and so on until the top of the food chain is reached, typically the large wetland birds and the raptors.

The full effect on wintering species will not be apparent until probably December. However, the effect on some species that are or appear to be year round-residents here is apparent in the count, bearing in mind that other factors that are variable from year to year mean that a single count cannot be as meaningful as a multi-year average. Note that for some apparently year round resident species the birds that are here in the summer are not the same individual birds as are here in the winter, as all birds in the population move south in winter with summer birds leave and are replaced by birds from further north. In other cases, there are individual birds that remain throughout the year, but in normal years are supplemented by additional birds moving in from the north.

The number of species seen is, of course, also dependent on the number of transiting migrant species seen, which in turn is mostly dependent on area wind and weather conditions. This year the number of species detected in Sabine Woods, the principal migrant "trap" in the county, was quite high. The overall result was 160 species, very close to the recent average. The number of individual at about 14,300 was quite high, but strongly influenced by larger than usual numbers of ibis and Cattle Egret.

In our analysis below, we try to mention species exhibiting large changes from last year on the preceding few years, and ones with significant trends..

Among the waterfowl, the number of Black-bellied Whistling Duck seemingly continues to increase and the number of the only transiting migratory duck species, Blue-winged Teal, was larger than usual. Mottled Duck numbers were again low, a disturbing trend.

Eurasian Collared Dove populations have apparently stabilized, but White-winged Doves after a number of years of rapidly increasing numbers appear to have significantly decreased, a trend that those who feed birds in their backyards may welcome. In the more open areas of the county, Mourning Doves appear to be holding their own.

After a couple of years on unexplained low numbers, hummingbird numbers returned to more normal numbers. Two Rufous Hummingbirds and one other Rufous/Allen's may be the beginning of a resurgence of the group as a wintering species in Jefferson County.

Return of Sora to the species list after four years absence is welcome. Historically, the species was present by mid-September but Virginia Rails do not normally show up until October, and we still have not ever found one on this count. Although not quite as numerous as last year, the number of Common Gallinules was still about three times the numbers over the preceding five years. Purple Gallinule numbers returned to previous norms.

Low numbers of Black-bellied Plovers and other beach birds probably reflects lack of access to the east beach at Sea Rim more than anything else. The continuing lack of Upland Sandpipers was a disappointment. The last count that the species was recorded on was 2016. The return of Dowitcher numbers to more normal levels after low numbers for five years was welcome.

Perhaps the stars of the count in inland Jefferson County were the Wood Storks. Two groups rose from the areas near the Salt Water Barrier in Beaumont, and another group was seen in the western part of the county. These Wood Storks were presumably starting their return journey back to their wintering groups around the shores of the southern Gulf of Mexico following post-breeding dispersal, which seems to have covered a longer period of time in recent years, and these were the largest flocks in recent counts. It was, however, disappointing to not find any Brown Boobies this year. There are a few still in "Greater Southeast Texas," but not the numbers that we found last year. A record number of White Ibis and a high number of dark ibis were the main contributors to the large number of individual birds seen on the count.

The count is always conducted on a date near the peak of Broad-winged Hawk migration but the hawks are not constrained by geography and pass over a wide front. We usually find a few. Perhaps more interesting are two other species of hawk that are spreading into the county. We first counted a White-tailed Hawk in 2007 and again in 2009. Since 2011, we have come to expect the species, in count week if not always on count day. White-tailed Hawk is essentially non-migratory but Swainson's Hawk is strongly migratory, with the occasional bird remaining well into the end of the year. It is almost certainly now a nesting species in the county and seems to be very slowly increasing.

Among the woodpeckers, the number of Red-headed Woodpeckers was reduced over recent counts. The species is especially dependent on dying and dead trees, and we seem to have worked through the casualties of recent hurricanes. On the other hand, Pileated Woodpecker numbers were back up to normal. Northern Flickers were particularly numerous last year, and, although not quite as plentiful this year, were still well above longer term averages. However, this may have been mostly a question of timing of migration this year.

The number of Crested Caracaras seem to have reached a steady state. Two Merlins was about normal. American Kestrel populations are a matter of concern across the United States and we did not find any. The count date is always right at the earliest date that kestrels can be expected, and the main factor may be the timing of the start of their migration window based on the conditions in their nesting grounds or post breeding dispersal sites.

The count date is always right at the end of the normal migration window of the *Empidonax* flycatchers, which are notoriously difficult to identify as to species in any case. The later the date, the more likely it becomes that any given flycatcher is a Least Flycatcher, but the Traill's complex (Willow/Alder) is also a possibility. Six birds is a good showing. A pair of well identified Tropical Kingbirds nested just east of Sabine Woods and fledged two young. Two of the four were seen on count day.

Between 1998 and 2003, we found about 100 Loggerhead Shrikes on each count. From 2014 on, the numbers have declined precipitously. While the total may have stabilized at about 25 in the past two or three years, the distribution has not been uniform. There have been a normal number of birds in the areas near the shore, but the number in the open areas of West Jefferson County has declined to a very low number. We believe the shrikes in our area are mostly year-round residents, although shrikes do withdraw from the northernmost parts of the range of the species in winter, and the local populations may be augmented in winter by migratory birds. Although shrikes are notoriously known to prey on small birds, we think large insects form a large part of the prey of local birds. The possibility exists that the repeated flooding events locally in connection with tropical storms and hurricanes swept away eggs and larvae of insects to an extent that is causing prey shortages. The severe freeze in February this year may have exacerbated the situation. Anecdotally, we would observe that shrikes seem not to be so

scarce in neighboring Chambers County. We will be carefully monitoring the situation over the next few years.

A well-documented Cassin's Vireo was found in Sabine Woods. The number of White-eyed Vireos was somewhat low but a good variety of other vireo species was seen.

For the second consecutive year, an early Red-breasted Nuthatch was found. This year, the bird was in an unusual place – Pilot Station Road. However, one was heard in Sabine Woods in the days following, and it is possible that this is the same bird, and that it is the one that spent last winter there.

The Northern Mockingbird represents another species exhibiting sharp declines from peaks around the turn of the century, and may be similar to the shrike situation discussed above. Although mockingbirds do withdraw from the northernmost part of the range in winter, the change is not as pronounced as it is with shrikes, so it appears that the vast majority of local birds are year round residents. Numbers seen on the count peaked in the 250-280 range in the first years of this century but are now fluctuating in the 120-150 range. Mockingbird diet in spring and summer is composed heavily of insects, but in Fall and Winter, berries and fruits are prominent in the diet. The decline in mockingbird numbers is not as pronounced as in shrikes, but does suggest some of the same factors are at play, and most likely insect populations. Although local shrikes do nest in close proximity to human habitation, at other times they are more birds of open country, while mockingbirds seem to prefer areas near human habitation, but not always in close proximity.

At least some Eastern Meadowlarks populations are clearly migratory as the areas of highest population density move about 500 miles south in winter. We have noted in past years, that meadowlarks are particularly hard to find in Jefferson County in September. There are two possible explanations that come to mind. One is that the summer residents move south before September, while the winter population does not arrive until October. Another possibility is that the birds are less observable during their annual molt in September. As the flight feathers are molting, the birds may not fly much and may remain in areas of grasslands that have an ample supply of seeds and other food items. Eight seen last year was abnormally high by historical standards; one this year was more normal.

Red-winged black numbers are much lower than they were in the 2001-2005 period. This, of course, was before the series of hurricanes and tropical storms that began with Hurricane Rita in 2005. But it was also the beginning of a transition by rice farmers to the semi-dwarf varieties that now predominate. It appears that harvesting these new varieties may well result in less grain being spilled reducing what is probably the prime food source for Red-winged Blackbirds over most of the year. Numbers of grackles (especially Common and Great-tailed) have not varied nearly as much.

Many birders are most interested, one might almost say obsessed, with the number of warbler species seen on any given day. With 21 species seen across the county, the vast majority in

Sabine Woods, it was good day for warblers. These included a Golden-winged and a Black-throated Blue and also a new species for the count, a Cerulean Warbler, always rare in the fall.

Participants: Linda and Howard Davis, Ashley Fuselier, Sherry Gibson, Claudia Gilson, John Haynes, Sheila Hebert, Denise and Gary Kelley, John Mariani, Steve Mayes, Andrea and Jim Nauman, Agnieszka Skuza, Sherrie Roden, Christine Sliva, Harlan Stewart, Jana and John Whittle.

WHISTLING-DUCK, Black-bell. (360); WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous (28); TEAL, Blue-winged (1196); DUCK, Mottled (8); GREBE, Pied-billed (10); PIGEON, Rock (577); COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian. (20); DOVE, Inca (4); DOVE, White-winged (24); DOVE, Mourning (303); CUCKOO, Yellow-billed (6); NIGHTHAWK, Common (1); WILL'S-WIDOW, Chuck- (1); SWIFT, Chimney (18); HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-throated (63); HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous (2); HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous/Allen's (1); HUMMINGBIRD species (3); RAIL, King (3); RAIL, Clapper (31); RAIL, King/Clapper (2); SORA (1); GALLINULE, Common (165); COOT, American (2); GALLINULE, Purple (5); STILT, Black-necked (187); AVOCET, American (4); PLOVER, Black-bellied (3); KILLDEER (30); PLOVER, Semipalmated (2); PLOVER, Piping (11); PLOVER, Snowy (4); CURLEW, Long-billed (3); TURNSTONE, Ruddy (2); KNOT, Red (1); SANDERLING (116); SANDPIPER, Least (69); SANDPIPER, Pectoral (count week); SANDPIPER, Western (6); SANDPIPER, Peep species (13); DOWITCHER, Short-billed (1); DOWITCHER, Long-billed (75); DOWITCHER, species (3); SNIPE, Wilson's (2); SANDPIPER, Spotted (11); SANDPIPER, Solitary (count week); YELLOWLEGS, Greater (37); WILLET (19); YELLOWLEGS, Lesser (51); GULL, Laughing (787); GULL, Lesser Black-backed (1); GULL, Species (250); TERN, Least (5); TERN, Gull-billed (1); TERN, Caspian (8); TERN, Forster's (18); TERN, Royal (34); SKIMMER, Black (7); STORK, Wood (282); ANHINGA (10); CORMORANT, Neotropic (342); CORMORANT, Species (2); PELICAN, Brown (64); BITTERN, American (1); HERON, Great Blue (26); EGRET, Great (148); EGRET, Snowy (216); HERON, Little Blue (80); HERON, Tricolored (68); EGRET, Reddish (5); EGRET, Cattle (1668); HERON, Green (19); NIGHT-HERON, Black-crowned (7); NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crowned (11); NIGHT-HERON species (3); IBIS, White (2681); IBIS, White-faced (24); IBIS, *Plegadis* (1085); SPOONBILL, Roseate (26); VULTURE, Black (74); VULTURE, Turkey (57); OSPREY (8); HARRIER, Northern (1); HAWK, Cooper's (4);

EAGLE, Bald (count week); HAWK, White-tailed (2); HAWK, Red-shouldered (6); HAWK, Broad-winged (4); HAWK, Swainson's (4); HAWK, Red-tailed (3); OWL, Barn (2); OWL, Great Horned (2); OWL, Barred (3); KINGFISHER, Belted (9); WOODPECKER, Red-headed (2); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (28); WOODPECKER, Downy (12); WOODPECKER, Pileated (12); FLICKER, Northern (1); CARACARA, Crested (6); MERLIN (2); FLYCATCHER, Olive-sided (1); WOODPEWEE, Eastern (4); FLYCATCHER, Yellow-bell. (1); FLYCATCHER, Traill's (2); FLYCATCHER, Least (1); FLYCATCHER, *Empidonax* (3); FLYCATCHER, Great Crested (3); KINGBIRD, Tropical (2); KINGBIRD, Eastern (15); FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tail. (13); SHRIKE, Loggerhead (24); VIREO, White-eyed (16); VIREO, Yellow-throated (5); VIREO, Cassin's (1); VIREO, Philadelphia (2); VIREO, Warbling (1); VIREO, Red-eyed (10); JAY, Blue (112); CROW, American (44); CROW, Fish (19); CROW, Species (7); SWALLOW, Tree (1); SWALLOW, N Rough-wing. (4); SWALLOW, Barn (20); SWALLOW, Cliff/Cave (8); SWALLOW species (102); CHICKADEE, Carolina (24); TITMOUSE, Tufted (8); NUTHATCH, Red-breasted (1); WREN, Carolina (32); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (28); BLUEBIRD, Eastern (14); CATBIRD, Gray (3); THRASHER, Brown (4); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (140); STARLING, European (302); FINCH, House (3); SPARROW, Seaside (40); MEADOWLARK, Eastern (1); ORIOLE, Baltimore (2); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (79); COWBIRD, Brown-headed (389); GRACKLE, Common (349); GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (114); GRACKLE, Great-tailed (248); GRACKLE, Gt-tailed/Boat-tailed (28); BLACKBIRD species (256); OVENBIRD (3); WATERTHRUSH, Northern (1); WATERTHRUSH species (1); WARBLER, Golden-winged (1); WARBLER, Blue-winged (2); WARBLER, Black-and-wh. (11); WARBLER, Prothonotary (8); WARBLER, Nashville (1); WARBLER, Mourning (1); WARBLER, Kentucky (1); YELLOWTHROAT, Com. (9); WARBLER, Hooded (11); REDSTART, American (6); PARULA, Northern (1); WARBLER, Magnolia (1); WARBLER, Blackburnian (4); WARBLER, Yellow (1); WARBLER, Black-throated Blue (1); WARBLER, Pine (9); WARBLER, Black-throated Green (2); WARBLER, Canada (2); WARBLER, Wilson's (1); TANAGER, Summer (4); TANAGER, Scarlet (1); CARDINAL, Northern (55); GROSBEAK, Rose-breasted (9); GROSBEAK, Blue (14); BUNTING, Indigo (18); BUNTING, Painted (2); SPARROW, House (34); TOTAL (14305); Number of species (160); Number of Observers (19); Number of Parties (8); Number of Party-Hours (58.9).

Field Trip to Sabine Woods --23 October 2021

Steve Mayes

Not all field trips produce a big bird list. The Golden Triangle Audubon Society has hosted numerous field trips that showed off hundreds of birds and dozens of species, including quite a few rarities. And the group has had trips cancelled because of rain and even hurricanes. And then there have been field trips that were just kind of mediocre. No big bird list, no rarities just kind of ho hum birding. It happens. Such was the October field trip to Sabine Woods. It's not that it was bad, just that we are spoiled as birders in this area!

It was not a large turnout as far as field trip standards go but that is a good thing at Sabine Woods. When birding in a wooded area, smaller groups are better as it can be hard to get everyone on a bird on narrow paths and dense vegetation. But it was immediately clear that the woods was not super active on this day. Still, there were some birds around! Even if they were of the common sort. Sedge Wrens called from the marsh across the street and Great Egret and Tricolored Herons were among the wading birds seen flying over the marsh. A Yellow-billed Cuckoo was fairly cooperative for the group and permanent residents at the woods such as Blue Jays and Downy Woodpeckers were easily found. Some of our typical fall migrants like Brown Thrasher and Broad-winged Hawk were also seen by the group. Thrashers can accumulate at Sabine Woods in incredible numbers in the fall sometimes but this day there were only a few around. Typical winter birds also started to appear on this day. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and Ruby-crowned Kinglet were noted and will likely be on every Sabine Woods list until spring rolls around again.

One of those rarities the group was hoping to see was a Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher. This is a large, distinctly plumaged flycatcher native to the tropics and normally seen in the U.S. only in southeastern Arizona. But Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers do occasionally stray to Texas as one did recently to Sabine Woods. The bird was a bit chaotic in allowing sightings. Some days it allowed few if any looks and people worked for hours for a glimpse. Other days it was incredibly cooperative giving close looks and photos to anyone present. This bird has only been seen in this area a handful of times over the years so it is a true rarity and prized by any birder lucky enough to see it. The flycatcher stayed around for quite a while, longer than most Sulphur-bellied's have in the past but it was unfortunately gone before the field trip came around. Birders were still looking for it just in case it was only being difficult again but the bird was not refund.

Luckily other birds were found! Warblers were not super numerous on the day but the group did find a decent selection. It was no surprise finding Common Yellowthroat as they are resident at Sabine Woods but Cape May Warbler is not supposed to be present in the fall. Nonetheless, a beautiful male Cape May was spotted fairly early in day high in the main canopy though it was not very cooperative. More typical migrants like Tennessee Warbler and Magnolia Warbler, always common in the fall, were better seen by the birders.

Black-throated Green Warbler was one of the more common warblers on the day and the group also enjoyed seeing Northern Parula. Nashville Warbler is always much easier to see in the fall than it is in the spring and at least one bird was seen on this field trip.

There were other nice birds seen on the field trip as well. At least two Red-breasted Nuthatches were found. These birds often show up in the fall but don't always stick around for long so it was nice to see these birds stay for the group. The group also stirred up a Barn Owl which is always nice. A few of these beautiful nocturnal raptors always seem to congregate in Sabine Woods in the fall. A mustard-colored Summer Tanager was located and appreciated by the birders while Gray Catbirds were a bit more difficult to see. Some high-pitched calls alerted the group to Golden-crowned Kinglets in the woods and they were eventually sighted. Eastern Phoebes, our common wintering flycatcher also turned up and will likely be present for the next few months. Our resident Carolina Chickadee was easily seen while fussy House Wrens called from the underbrush. Blue Grosbeak and Indigo Bunting were noted from the grassy areas outside the woods while a Sharp-shinned Hawk hunted from overhead. A couple of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were lingering at the woods while migrating Black Vultures streamed overhead.

So, all in all, not a bad field trip. But after the spectacular spring Sabine Woods trip, anything would be a little bit of a letdown. And no rarities but still some nice birds around. Not every trip is a blockbuster sometimes you have to settle for just seeing some nice birds in a beautiful coastal woodlot. It still beats working and there is always the next field trip to look forward to!

The following species were noted by the field trip leaders: Yellow-billed Cuckoo (1); Ruby-throated Hummingbird (2); King/Clapper Rail (2); Neotropic Cormorant (1); Great Blue Heron (1); Great Egret (2); Snowy Egret (5); Tricolored Heron (2); White Ibis (3); White-faced Ibis (8); Roseate Spoonbill (4); Black Vulture (20); Turkey Vulture (7); Northern Harrier (2); Sharp-shinned Hawk (1); Broad-winged Hawk (1); Barn Owl (1); Red-bellied Woodpecker (2); Downy Woodpecker (4); Northern Flicker (1); Empidonax sp. (1); Eastern Phoebe (2); Loggerhead Shrike (2); Blue Jay (8); Carolina Chickadee (1); Tree Swallow (1); Barn Swallow (6); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (1); Golden-crowned Kinglet (2); Red-breasted Nuthatch (2); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (5); House Wren (3); Sedge Wren (2); Gray Catbird (2); Brown Thrasher (4); Northern Mockingbird (1); Red-winged Blackbird (8); Common Grackle (1); Boat-tailed/Great-tailed Grackle (20); Tennessee Warbler (1); Nashville Warbler (1); Common Yellowthroat (3); Cape May Warbler (1); Northern Parula (1); Magnolia Warbler (4); Black-throated Green Warbler (4); Summer Tanager (1); Northern Cardinal (2); Blue Grosbeak (1); Indigo Bunting (5)

Bird Sightings – October 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 As we have noted before, for species that have not undergone an obvious range expansion over the past 15 years or so, we use the Birders Checklist of the Upper Texas

Coast 9th Ed (May 2008) to determine whether a sighting justifies inclusion as rare or very rare. We prefer to use this checklist because it includes most of the counties we cover – unfortunately not including the Big Thicket Counties just north of the Golden Triangle – but was compiled using the same criteria across all the counties. The eBird "filters", however, are at the discretion of the reviewer(s) for the county. There are a number of other situations, probably principally due to increased birding effort, where this checklist indicates a migrant species is rare much earlier in the fall than the increasing body of evidence that is accumulating in eBird now indicates. This year, our attention was drawn to Yellow-billed Cuckoo. The UTC checklist has this as rare after October 7. After reviewing eBird records, we have decided to include here only records later than October 21. (It may even be that this species should not be regarded as rare until the beginning of November).

Seen in our Core Counties (listed above)

Blue-winged.x Cinnamon Teal	Oct 29	JEF-TP (1) HS
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Oct 23	JEF-SW (1) SM mult obs (late)
Whooping Crane	Oct 14	JEF-Hwy 73 (2) Scotty Lofland
Least Tern	Oct 15	JEF-SRSP (7) Nancy Angell
Wood Stork	Oct 31	JEF-S China Rd (1) MC
Sulphur-bell. Flycatcher	Oct 7-18	JEF-SW (1) SM, JHH mult obs
Tropical Kingbird	Oct 15	JEF-Hwy 87 (1) Scotty Lofland
Eastern Kingbird	Oct 17	JEF-TP (1) Jerri Simmons
Purple Martin	Oct 1	ANG-Lufkin (2) Gary Hunte
Ovenbird	Oct 30	JEF-SW (1) JHH, mult obs
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	Oct 10-12	JEF-SW (1) mult obs
	Oct 14-15	JEF-SW (1) JHH mult obs
	Oct 26	JEF-SW (1 fem) mult obs
	Oct 28	JEF-SW (1) JHH, Ashley Fuselier
Cape May Warbler	Oct 12-26	JEF-SW (up to 2) mult obs (not same bird(s) over whole period)
Magnolia Warbler	Oct 26	JEF-SW (5) SM mult obs
	Oct 30	JEF-SW (1) SM JAW, mult obs
Yellow-throated Warbler	Oct 12	ANG-Lufkin (2) Gary Hunter

Nearby Counties

Common Ground –Dove	Oct 15	GAL-Texas City Preserve ((1) Aaron Tjelmeland
	Oct 16	CAM-Willow Island (1) Charles Lyon, Paul Conover
Groove-billed Ani	Oct 8-9	HAS-Baytown Nature Ctr ((1) Dale Wolck, Letha Staigle
	Oct 21	CAM-Peveto Woods (2) Karen Terrell, Mike VanEtten
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Oct 22	CAM-Peveto Woods (4) Katie Barnes
Eastern Whip-poor-will	Oct 22	HAS-Bear Creek Park (1) Jim Hinson, Howard Smith
Broad-tail. Hummingbird	Oct 7-31	HAS-Memorial area (1) Sue Orwig
	Oct 8	HAS-Kleb Woods (1) Fred Collins, Kendra Kocab
	Oct 9-31	HAS-Friendswood (1) Chris Bick
Calliope Hummingbird	Oct 4	CAL-Charlotte Chehotsky
Limpkin	Oct 4-26	HAS-Sheldon Lake SP (1) mult obs
Sandhill Crane	Oct 2	HAS-NW Houston (84) Kathie Holder
	Oct 17	HAS-Piner Gully Park (3) John O'Brien

Gt. Black-backed Gull	Oct 13	HAS-5 miles NE of San Luis Pass (1) Jen Garcia
	Oct 16	GAL-San Luis Pass (1) J&C Miles
Magnificent Frigatebird	Oct 9	CAM-East of Holly Beach (2) Eric Ripma
Wood Stork	Oct 29	HAS-Baytown (16) Dale Wolck
	Oct 30	GAL-League City (10) Mattie Elsik
	Oct 30	HAS-Baytown Nat Ctr (5) Nicholas DeBrock
	Oct 31	HAS-Exploration Green (1) Candice Annen< Chris Bick
Brown Booby	Oct 3-31	HAS-Baytown Nat Ctr (6) mult obs
	Oct 9	CAM-Calcasieu Ship Channel nr Gulf (3) Mark Meunier
American Golden-Plover	Oct 2	GAL-San Luis Pass (1) Cin-Ty Lee
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Oct 2-5, 14	GAL-Galveston Airport (2) Richard Liebler, mult obs
Common Black Hawk	Oct 17	CHA-Smith Point Hawk Watch (1) Joseph Kennedy
Red-naped Sapsucker	Oct 9, 30	HAS-Armand Bayou Nature Ctr (1) Chris Bick, mult obs
Greater Pewee	Oct 20-31	HAS-Bear Creek Park (1) Jim Hinson, mult oobs
Western Wood-Pewee	Oct 22	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Cheryl Huner, Michael Musumeche
BAsh-throated Flycatcher		Oct 2 HAS-Robt Stuart Park (1) James Rieman
Gt Crested Flycatcher	Oct 4	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Colette Micallef
Couch's Kingbird	Oct 24	CAL-SE of Lake Charles (1) Kirsten Livingston
	Oct 29	CAL-Sulphur (1) Steve Svedeman
Cassin's Kingbird	Oct 4	CHA-FM562 3 miles NW of Smith Point (1) John Mariani
	Oct 5	CHA-Smith Point Hawk Watch (1) mult obs
Western Kingbird	Oct 3	CAM-Trosclair Rd (1) Michele Mclindon, Van Remsen, Nick Ramsey, mult obs
Western Kingbird	Oct 18	Sabine NWR Blue Goose Trl (1) John Dillon, Philip Whitlow
	Oct 31	CAM-Johnson Bayou (1) Malise Prieto
	Oct 31	CAL-SW of Lake Charles (1) Charlotte Chehotsky

(continued on page 3)

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FIRST CLASS MAIL

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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 TEXBIRDS 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.