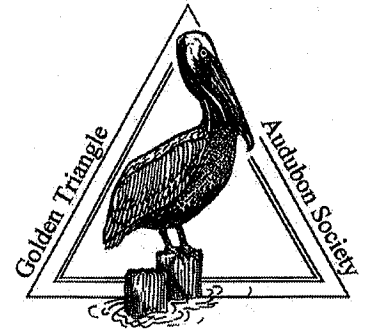


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 28 No. 12

December 2022

2022-23 Christmas Bird Counts

Please help the compilers by enabling them to plan in the week preceding the count by letting them know early of your wish to participate, and avoiding last minute changes if at all possible. Most compilers can accommodate a last minute withdrawal more easily than trying to assign someone to a group at the last minute (unless they have indicated to you that you will be birding a sector alone). Details of other Texas counts are available on the Houston Audubon web site at <https://houstonaudubon.org/birding/christmas-bird-counts/cbc.html>

Beech Creek (TXBE): Tuesday, December 20, 2022

This count takes place in Tyler and Jasper Counties and includes Steinhagen Lake, the Beech Creek unit of Big Thicket National Preserve and Martin Dies State Park. If not assigned in advance to a sector, meet the compilers at the Corps of Engineers Picnic Area on FM92 immediately north of the intersection with FM1746 in Town Bluff at 6:30 am. Sponsored by the Big Thicket National Preserve. Contact Co-compiler Nancy Angell. (nascanca@gmail.com, telephone 214-912-1900). Co-Compiler Sheila Hebert, sheilakhebert@hotmail.com

Bolivar Peninsula (TXBP): Thursday, December 15, 2022

This count circle in Chambers County includes High Island and Anahuac NWR. Compilers this year are Steve Mayes and David Sarkozi. If you are interested in participating, please contact Steve Mayes at sgmayes@hotmail.com

Johnson Bayou - Southwest Louisiana (LAJB): Wednesday, December 14, 2022

Johnson Bayou CBC has a rich history beginning in 1976 to present. Although the count is located just across the state line in Louisiana, most participants are from Texas and everyone is welcome. While much of the area is private, local landowners have allowed access to their property for this count, areas rarely birded and normally inaccessible to birders at other times offering a good chance for rarities. Areas covered include beach, coastal cheniers, marsh and grasslands. Johnson Bayou is located off Hwy 82 in Louisiana just across from Pleasure Island, Texas. From Port Arthur, take Hwy 82 east for about 15 miles into Louisiana. Please contact Gary Kelley (garymke@sbcglobal.net, telephone 409-679-1616) for more information, assignments and directions.

Orange County (TXOC): Sunday January 1, 2023.

Habitat covers marsh, woodlands, and the Cow Bayou watershed. All are invited, even if you are not an experienced birder or are only able to bird for part of the day. Feeder watchers are welcome to participate. Let us know in advance and we will find a suitable group for you to join. The more pairs of eyes in a group, the more birds will be seen. Contact Gary Kelley (garymke@sbcglobal.net, telephone 409-679-1616), for more information.

Turkey Creek (TXTC): Saturday, December 17, 2022.

This count in Hardin and Tyler Counties includes the Turkey Creek and Hickory Creek Savannah Units of the Big Thicket National Preserve. If not assigned in advance to a sector, meet the compilers outside the entrance to the Big Thicket Visitor Center on US69 at FM420, about 7 miles north of Kountze at 6:30 am. Sponsored by the Big Thicket National Preserve. Contact Co-compiler Nancy Angell. (nascanca@gmail.com, 214-912-1900). Co Compiler: Sheila Hebert, sheilakhebert@hotmail.com

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. Changes will always be posted on the web site at www.goldentriangleaudubon.org.

Christmas Bird Counts

Johnson Bayou – Wednesday Dec 14

Bolivar Peninsula – Thursday Dec 15

Turkey Creek – Saturday Dec 17

Beech Creek – Tuesday Dec 20

Orange County – Sunday Jan 1

Further details of these counts on p. 1.

Houston Audubon maintains a list of Texas Christmas Count dates at <https://houstonaudubon.org/birding/christmas-bird-counts/cbc.html>

Thursday January 19. Membership Meeting. Details in next month's issue.

Saturday, January 21, 2023. Tentative Field Trip to Cattail Marsh, Beaumont. Meet at the parking lot for Cattail Marsh at 8:00 am. The parking lot is accessed from the loop road round the main picnic areas in Tyrrell Park.

In winter, there will usually be a good variety of ducks as well as other waterbirds, egrets and herons. Exactly where the birds are depends largely on the water depth in the various cells.

Many birds can be seen from the boardwalk and nearby roads with minimal walking, **but the group will probably make a leisurely three-or-so-mile hike round the various cells in the marsh. Be advised that, while you can turn around at any point, there are no meaningful "shortcuts" after you start on the levee between cells 3 and 4.**

If you don't want to walk that far, there will be someone on the boardwalk to help you identify the many birds in the near cells. Walking is on the levees; the main ones are graveled, but some of the interior ones are essentially mowed grass. This will be a good trip for beginning to intermediate birders, as most of the waterfowl and wading birds are relatively easy to study in the open water areas. We will try to have the Education Center open for those who do not want to make the hike.

Directions to Tyrrell Park From the South

Go "north" on US69/96/287 around the south side of Beaumont.

The Highway 124 bridge over Hillebrandt Bayou is currently closed. Therefore, it is necessary to take IH-10 west towards Houston and exit almost immediately at the Walden Road exit, turning south (left) on Walden Road. At the first light, go straight ahead onto Tyrrell Park Road and go about 3/4 mile.

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

From IH10

Exit at Walden Road on the west side of Beaumont and turn south on Walden Road and as above.

Golden Triangle Audubon Facebook

Join us on Facebook! There is a Golden Triangle Audubon group on Facebook, moderated by Jana Whittle and John Mariani. Our aim is to provide a space for people around the Golden Triangle to share pictures, sightings, and other information about birds, other nature, and local birding sites and habitats. All levels of pictures are welcome, especially of less common birds. If you are looking for help with identification, please include the location and date of the picture, as both are important in narrowing the possibilities. Send your contribution through a Facebook message or an email to 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

Hawk Watches

Both Smith Point Hawk Watch and Corpus Christi Hawk Watch have completed 26 years of counting hawks. To me, it is an incredibly hard task to face the weather for 105 consecutive days, not to mention the sun baring down. I am very grateful to Gulf Coast Birding Observatory for finding groups and individuals who fund the Smith Point Hawk Watch and the groups funding the Corpus Christi Hawk Watch. Also, we should be grateful for all the hawk counters and volunteers. I know it takes lots of people to have the two counts.

This year was the fourth lowest hawk count of 26 years for the Smith Point Hawk Watch. Smith Point Hawk Watch saw 27,450 hawks. The Red-tailed Hawk totals were the second highest of the total years. The lowest year was the year of Hurricane Ike 2008.

Corpus had the sixth highest count this year. The highest year was 2004 when they recorded 1,030,849 hawks. This year Corpus Christi Hawk Watch saw 768,983 hawks. This count broke 8 records of various bird species seen. They were: American Kestrels, Merlins, Swainson's, Cooper's, Swallow-tailed Kites, Northern Harriers, Black Vultures and Turkey Vultures. Sharp-shinned Hawks were the

second highest, and Mississippi Kites were the fourth highest. I feel that having these two hawk watches within driving distances from our area, gives us a great chance to see hawk migration. Yes, we must go multiple days because some days are better than others.

Other hawk U.S.A. hawk watches are Detroit River in Michigan and they recorded 145,545 so far this year. Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory in Minnesota recorded 65,155 this year. Cape May Hawk Watch recorded 46,231 this year so far. The Florida Keys Hawk Watch recorded 30,308. Hawk Mountain recorded 20,114.

If you would like to go outside of the U.S.A., Bocas Valle in Panama recorded 4,552,095 so far this year. Kekoldi in Costa Rica recorded 3,338,888 so far this year. Veracruz River of Raptors in Cardel, Mexico recorded 2,591,735 hawks so far. Please keep in mind these three hawk watches include over 1,000,000 Turkey Vultures migrating in their counts most years.

Hope you get to go several days some years to have the full experience of hawk migration in our area.

Jana Whittle

Smith Point and Corpus Christi Hawkwatches 2022

	Observation Hours	Black Vulture	Turkey Vulture	Osprey	Bald Eagle	Northern Harrier	Sharp-shinned Hawk	Cooper's Hawk	Red-Shouldered Hawk	Broad-winged Hawk	Red-Tailed Hawk	Swainson's Hawk	Ferruginous Hawk	White-tailed Hawk	Harris's Hawk	Golden Eagle	American Kestrel	Merlin	Peregrine Falcon	Prairie Falcon	Aplomado Falcon	Crested Caracara	Mississippi Kite	Swallow-tailed Kite	White-tailed Kite	Short-tailed Hawk	Unidentified Accipiter	Unidentified Buteo	Unidentified Falcon	Unidentified Raptor	Total	
SMITH POINT																																
Total Aug 2022	119 hours	0	0	1	0	0	1	36	5	137	4	88	0	2	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	102	62	2	0	0	0	0	0	452
Total Sep 2022	239 hours	0	0	21	3	75	645	532	28	10022	69	72	0	2	0	0	121	25	41	0	0	1	3777	60	2	0	7	0	0	0	15503	
Total Oct 2022	241.33 hours	141	2705	11	18	423	1174	552	14	2691	92	144	1	2	2	1	447	30	26	0	0	0	81	0	1	0	3	0	1	0	8560	
Total Nov 2022	154.43 hours	20	2104	13	23	173	147	135	1	188	202	31	0	2	0	1	20	6	5	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	3078	
Total Fall 2022	782.52	161	4809	53	45	671	1967	1255	48	13038	367	335	1	8	2	2	591	63	73	0	0	1	3961	122	7	0	12	0	1	0	27593	
CORPUS CHRISTI																																
Total Aug 2022	219.27 hours	0	0	17	0	0	0	8	0	94	0	33	0	5	1	0	2	0	3	0	1	1	14308	249	0	0	0	0	3	0	4	14729
Total Sep 2022	257 hours	19	123	129	4	169	590	470	9	465250	14	224	0	12	9	1	596	56	87	1	0	1	15026	134	1	1	29	7	8	44	483010	
Total Oct 2022	248.75 hours	680	157686	56	7	430	1916	1470	16	58289	89	26405	2	15	3	2	1074	119	58	2	0	3	46	0	1	0	49	6	5	45	248477	
Total Nov 2022	110.08 hours	645	21361	6	4	156	122	120	12	38	182	42	1	13	6	2	12	4	13	0	0	12	1	0	4	0	7	0	0	1	22762	
Total Fall 2022	835.1 hours	1344	179170	208	15	755	2628	2068	37	523671	285	26704	3	45	19	5	1684	179	161	3	1	15	29381	383	6	1	85	16	13	94	768983	

Data from Hawk Migration Association of North America's HawkCount Database

Field Trip to West Jefferson County – 19 November 2022

One aspect of our Field Trips that we cannot control is the weather. We long ago concluded that attempting to preemptively cancel a Field Trip based on weather forecasts while that is still semi-practical would result in the cancellation of Field Trips that in the event are only affected to a minor extent. Some Field Trips do necessitate long periods and distances away from any shelter; protection of optical equipment and cameras make it imprudent to persevere in heavy rain conditions on such occasions. Hurricane forecasts and threats cause the cancellation of Field Trips because of concomitant evacuation and travel problems. But continuous heavy rain, although it certainly occurs, is relatively unusual in Southeast Texas; more common are rain showers or fairly light rain which, while not ideal conditions, do not render the day completely unbirdable. True, some families of birds especially those that rely on catching flying insects, will take the day off and perch quietly out of sight. But others will take full advantage of their natural feather waterproofing, and continue to feed. Some birds revel in wet conditions and not only ducks but also many birds that are typically classified as shorebirds in the US, and as waders in Europe. The waterproofing of bird feathers owes as much to the microstructure of the feathers – hooks and barbules – as it does to the wax from the preen glands, that serves as a conditioner. In "aquatic" birds, ducks and other birds that dive into water, this waterproofing is incredibly effective. The same structural mechanism makes "Gore-Tex" fabric waterproof. This year's West Jefferson County Field Trip faced a weather issue, one where the forecasts were, for a change, very accurate. This trip is conducted almost exclusively as a "car birding" trip, so not all was lost. Indeed, looking at the trip list below indicates that a fairly good variety of species was detected, despite the frequent light rain showers. About 12 birders started on the Trip. As always, some birders could not bird all day, but there were still eight members left at the end at about 4:00 PM.

The Field Trip to West Jefferson County has been eagerly looked forward to each year, and it has almost always provided something interesting. But in many ways, rather than the serendipitous rarities, it has been the newly arrived wintering species that have been the targets. Finding the large flock of Sandhill Cranes that have wintered in a relatively small area of the western part of the county since the winter of 1997-98 has always been a mark of success. They typically don't arrive until mid-November, but they do so reliably, and in a flock that in modern times usually approaches or exceeds 1,000 when all have arrived. In addition to the cranes, a nice variety of raptors comes south for the colder months. American Kestrels typically start appearing locally as early as late September, but other raptors aren't prominent until early November. Unlike spring migration, fall migration varies depending on the climatic vagaries of hot and cold and also wet and dry, and the effect those have on avian food sources.

The Field Trip assembled as usual at the intersection of FM 365 and Johnson Road. A number of houses have been built in the vicinity of that intersection, and the tall grass "prairie" that used to be so attractive to sparrows has given way to shorter

grass yards, which on this day harbored meadowlarks and even a few Least Sandpipers in the pools of water already developing. The Sandhill Crane flock had already been detected on the ground south of the western part of League Road by participants en route to the meeting place. Although the birds were not particularly close, they were readily visible. The stately birds were walking along just north of a rice-field levee of the kind that is so common in that part of the county, but then began taking flight and disappearing from view on the other side of the levee. The estimates were that there were about 500 birds visible, and quite likely more hidden behind levees. There were few if any immature birds with patches of brownish plumage, so it remains to be determined if this was not a particularly productive year for the cranes. Interestingly, there were 300-500 Killdeer in the shorter grass across the road. For some years since Hurricane Harvey left its mark on the area in 2017, the various "blackbird" flocks have contained smaller numbers of birds. Although there were grackles, mostly Common Grackles, and some Red-winged Blackbirds, the majority were Brown-headed Cowbirds, which seem to have regained some of their former strength, with a couple of large flocks, probably at least 1,500 in total encountered. Mourning Doves do not favor wet areas, and on this day, about 55 were perched high and dry on the fence surrounding a pipeline valve station. One house on League Road is favored by Eurasian Collared-Doves, and nine of them were around this house.

The rain was not so heavy as to deter the various raptors that make the area their winter homes. One of the first species seen was the American Kestrel. In recent years, those studying the species have expressed concern about what they concluded was a declining population. The US Kestrel population moves south in winter to Southeast Texas (and the Gulf Coast) from its breeding range and moves north and west especially to the open mountainous areas of the west in spring. It is too early to have any definitive information, but if Southeast Texas is any guide, the numbers this winter are greatly increased over last year. The Red-tailed Hawk is perhaps the most obvious large hawk of the genus *Buteo* and is another conspicuous winter resident in Southeast Texas. The species is hardier than most raptors and it is often well into December before most have arrived. Again, the numbers seem very healthy this year, especially for so early in the "winter." Most appear to be adults with red tails. Young birds retain a barred tail until they molt a second time typically when they are at least 15 months old. Northern Harriers also winter, and several were seen coursing low over open fields. Adult males, essentially gray and white in plumage, and known colloquially as 'Gray Ghosts' in hawk-watching circles, are not nearly as common in Southeast Texas as females and juveniles, but at least two males were seen. The birds with orange bellies are juveniles, and in our area, often seem to outnumber adults.

As we progressed south along League Road and then followed it as it turned east, the roadside vegetation became thicker and we began to see more *Passerines*. A number of Yellow-rumped Warblers, with their characteristic chip note, flew from one side of the road to the other. A Ruby-crowned

Kinglet was present, and a calling Eastern Phoebe was easily identified by call and tail wagging. We continued along Heisig Road, a shell road with very little traffic, and thus easily birded. One noteworthy sighting was an American Crow. North of this location, any crow is likely to be an American Crow, while any crow south of it stands a fair chance of turning out to be a Fish Crow. In this overlap zone, it helps if the bird will call! A sure sign that what is considered to be winter in the area has arrived was a flock of about 60 Snow Geese high in the medium distance. There were three American Kestrels on wires along the road. A flock of 15 White Ibis were seen in a moist field. But the interesting part of this road was the north end, just before it enters the wooded area. The vegetation of the west side of the road in that area is currently mainly forbs that have produced a copious supply of seeds. So, it was not surprising that there were plenty of sparrows in this vegetation. As usual, the vast majority were Savannah Sparrows. But the vegetation is quite thick, and the sparrows were very active, so it was not easy to get a long enough look at a stationary bird to be sure of an identification. The variety of other sparrows was nevertheless quite extensive, but none of the observers saw all of them! Perhaps the most interesting were two apparent Field Sparrows. Others present included Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow and White-crowned Sparrow. One other seed eating bird proved to be a Sedge Wren. A rather distant hawk could not be identified, but it was either a rather small Red-tailed Hawk or a reasonably large Cooper's Hawk. Heisig Road at its northern end joins Johnson Road. Six crows there appeared to be American Crows.

Johnson Road led us back to FM 365 near South China Road, which is often productive from a birding perspective. In the front yard of one of several new houses along the first part of that road, water was beginning to stand, and spread out over the grass were about 30 Wilson's Snipe. The road produced many of the common species of the open areas of the county, including more American Kestrels, Red-tailed Hawks, Northern Harriers, and many more Savannah Sparrows. Another somewhat larger skein of about 60 Snow Geese passed by in the distant north. There were a number of meadowlarks. Most birders default meadowlarks to Eastern Meadowlarks, but it is worth noting that a year or so ago, a small number of Western Meadowlarks were confirmed on South China Road about half way along. So, we are reluctant to do any defaulting, and think it best to record all meadowlarks in winter in West Jefferson County as meadowlark species, unless determined to be Eastern or Western, best done by the call. We know this flies in the face of official eBird policy which holds that in the absence of any strong reason to suspect that a bird that is clearly one or the other of a species pair that cannot routinely without special effort be separated in the field should be defaulted to the common species. We are concerned that this practice is unscientific and tends to conceal the extent to which the less common species actually occurs in an area. Since the distribution of a species is often changing, withdrawing from some areas and expanding into others, the practice of defaulting at the very least effectively delays the recognition of the expansion. The excuse that failing to default complicates analysis of eBird records is often given. While

this may, just may, have been valid in earlier days of data analysis, it is no longer valid. If a researcher wants to make the assumption that the vast majority of the birds reported are of the common species, that can now easily be easily done by combining those not identified to a specific species with those recorded as one of the pair. If defaulting has taken place, there is no way to reverse it, and the potential to gain information on just how many were actually confirmed as the more common species is lost forever. Western and Eastern Meadowlark is not the only species pair that should be treated with more caution. White-faced and Glossy Ibis is another such pair.

From South China Road, the group proceeded along Lawhon Road. A Merlin perched on top of a tree and obligingly stayed for photographs. In addition to three Red-tailed Hawks, there was one adult Red-shouldered Hawk, somewhat atypically perched in the open a good distance from a wooded area. The ponds south of Lawhon Road just west of New Bethel had some Greater Yellowlegs and a few American Coots, but most of the duck-like birds in the great distance were apparently inanimate decoys! The wooded area opposite the ponds had some of the expected species: Blue Jay, Northern Flicker and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher were added to the list.

We turned around and then headed north along Greenpond Gully Road. Notably there were no fewer than 11 Red-tailed hawks along its 3 3/4 mile-length. Another Eastern Phoebe was calling. A flock of Blue-winged Teal, perhaps 200 flew by. On reaching US 90, the party turned west and then started down McDermand Road. Many of the birds seen were additional examples of species seen earlier, Red-tailed Hawks, Wilson's Snipe, Yellow-rumped Warbler. A new species for the trip was a Belted Kingfisher, heard only. Some ponds on McDermand held the most visible ducks of the day, including Mottled Duck, Northern Shoveler and two Mallards. An estimated 500 flying Snow Geese were noted.

The following list includes birds seen by the author and others reported by other participants.

47 Species observed, 4 other taxa, 3,449 individuals
 Snow Goose (620); Blue-winged Teal (12); Northern Shoveler (12); Mallard (2); Mottled Duck (6); teal sp. (100); Eurasian Collared-Dove (9); Mourning Dove (88); American Coot (5); Sandhill Crane (532); Black-necked Stilt (4); Killdeer (327); Least Sandpiper (5); Wilson's Snipe (40); Greater Yellowlegs (7); Great Blue Heron (5); Great Egret (11); White Ibis (47); Glossy/White-faced Ibis (200); Turkey Vulture (1); Northern Harrier (11 incld 2 male,); Cooper's Hawk (1); Bald Eagle (1); Red-shouldered Hawk (2 Details adult); Red-tailed Hawk (26); Belted Kingfisher (1 heard only); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (1); Red-bellied Woodpecker (1); Northern Flicker (1); American Kestrel (33); Merlin (1); Eastern Phoebe (3); Blue Jay (1); American Crow (7); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (3); Sedge Wren (1); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (1); European Starling (20); Northern Mockingbird (6); Field Sparrow (2); Savannah Sparrow (26); Song Sparrow (1); Swamp Sparrow (1); Eastern Meadowlark (1 heard only); Western/Eastern Meadowlark (25); Red-winged Blackbird (5); Brown-headed Cowbird (1500); Common Grackle (120); Yellow-rumped Warbler (5); Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle) (8); Northern Cardinal (1 male). 47 species and 4 other taxa.

John A. Whittle

Bird Sightings – November 2022

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. In most cases, we do not include birds that are "heard only" or probably hybrids.

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: Very little space here this month! A large fraction of the reports are migrant that are late heading across the Gulf.

Local Counties (listed above)

White-winged Scoter	Nov 20	JEF-SM, mult obs
Chuck-will's-Widow	Nov 6	JEF-SW (1) SM
Ruby-throated H'bird	Nov 10	ANG-Westwood Bend Area (1) Katrina Echols
Purple Gallinule	Nov 5-10	JEF-TP (2) HS
Wood Stork	Nov 21	JEF-TP (1) Greg Jackson
Brown Booby	Nov 15	JEF-PI N Levee (1) Greg Jackson
Eastern Wood-Pewee	Nov 6	JEF-SW (1) SM
Purple Finch	Nov 21	ANG-Morris Frank Park (1) Gary Hunter
Tropical Parula	Nov 10-27	JEF-SW (1) SM
Magnolia Warbler	Nov 10	JEF-SW Howard Davis
Nashville Warbler	Nov 20	SAB-Hemphill (1) David Bell

Nearby Counties

Fulvous Whistling-Duck	Nov 20	CAM-Lacassine Wildlife Loop (20) Jas. Smithers, Cyndi Simon
Cackling Goose	Nov 27	CHA-Smith Pt Hawk Watch (1) Joseph Kennedy
Greater Scaup	Nov 25	CAM-Trosclair Rd (1) Esme Rosen, Paul Conover
	Nov 28	CAM-Rutherford Beach (1) Michael Musumeche, Cheryl Huner, Charlotte Chehotsky
White-winged Scoter	Nov 4	Lake Charles (1) James Smithers
Common Ground Dove	Nov 5	GAL-Appfel Park (1) Bryan Cotter
	Nov 7	GAL-5th St (1) Jon Piasecki
	Nov 25	HAS-Col Jas Morgan New Washington Pk (1) Dale Wolck
Groove-billed Ani	Nov 6	CAM-Long Beach Rd (1) Esme Rosen
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Nov 9	HAS-Challenger Park (1) Alicia Watt, James Wheeler
Lesser Nighthawk	Nov 28	CAM-Rutherford Beach Rd (1) Andrew From
Calliope Hummingbird	Nov 5-7	HAS-Lakes On Eldridge (1) Ken Hartman, mult obs
	Nov 13-15	HAS-Friendswood (1) Chris Bick
Yellow Rail	Nov 9	HAS-Nelson Farms (4) mult obs
Wood Stork	Nov 2	GAL-Dick Benoit Prairie (1) Lisa Hardcastle
Semi-palmated Sandpiper	Nov 4	GAL-BF (1) mult obs
	Nov 2	CAL-SH Jones SP (18) Charlotte Chehotsky, mult obs
Pectoral Sandpiper	Nov 5	HAS-Kleb Woods (3) Michael and Sarah Kuzio
American Woodcock	Nov 12	HAS-Knollwood Village (1) John O'Brien
	Nov 13	HAS-Rice Univ (1) Elle Bow
Solitary Sandpiper	Nov 9,17	CAM-Cam Prairie VC (2) Max Roberts, Alain Roberts
Franklin's Gull	Nov 26	CAL-Lk Charles Swimming Bch (1) James Smithers

	Nov 26	CAM-Cameron Ferry (1) Paul Conover
	Nov 26-28	CAM-Holly Beach (1) Paul Conover, Logan Kahle
California Gull	Nov 15,18	GAL-Bolivar Flats (1) Wyatt Egelhoff, Richard Liebler
	Nov 20	GAL-Appfel Pk/E Beach (1) Dennis Cooke, mult obs
Red-throated Loon	Nov 12	CHA-Smith Point (1) Joseph Kennedy
Wood Stork	Nov 2	GAL-Dick Benoit Prairie (1) Lisa Hardcastle
Brown Booby	Nov 2-16	CAL-Lake Charles (3) James Smithers, mult obs
Least Bittern	Nov 6	CHA-Visitor Info Station (1) James Kamstra
Mississippi Kite	Nov 5	HAS-Pine Gully Park (120) Mult obs
	Nov 12	HAS-Houston Arboretum (1) Christine Mansfield, Victoria Nutt, Theo Ostler
White-tailed Hawk	Nov 28	CAL-Lionel DeRouen Rd (1) Michael Musumeche, Cheryl Huner, Rosemary Seidler
Swainson's Hawk	Nov 23-25	CAM-Creole Hwy, Cameron(1) mult obs
	Nov 28	HAS-Memorial (1) Sue Orwig
Ferruginous Hawk	Nov 23-30	CAM-Cameron area(1) mult obs
Burrowing Owl	Nov 1-30	CHA-ANWR Frozen Pt (1) mult obs
Red-naped Sapsucker	Nov 11	HAS-Sylvan Rodriguez Park (1) Richard Rulander
Hairy Woodpecker	Nov 13	HAS-Kleb Woods (2) Steven Dammer
Eastern Wood-Pewee	Nov 6	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Esme Rosen
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	Nov 12	GAL-Artist Boat Pres (1) Kevin McDonald
Great Crested Flycatcher	Nov 13	HAS-Arthur Storey Pk (1) Kristie Tobin
Great Kiskadee	Nov 24	GAL-Smith Oaks (1) Wyatt Egelhoff, Carrie Chapin, Jon Piasecki

Western Kingbird

	Nov 8	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Esme Rosen
	Nov 10	CAM-Trosclair Rd (1) Katie Barnes
	Nov 23	CAM-Lacassine NWR N End boat launch (1) Lindsay Seely, Chantal Correll
	Nov 26	CAM-Johnson Bayou (1) Paul Conover
	Nov 27	CAM-Holly Beach (1) Chantal Correll
	Nov 30	CAM-Trosclair Rd (1) Van Remsen
Cave Swallow	Nov 16	CAM-Nr. Peveto Woods (4) Marie Rust
	Nov 23	CAM-Creole Hwy, Cameron (1) mult obs
	Nov 28	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Logan Kahle

Wood Thrush	Nov 13	HAS-Kleb Woods (1) Steven Dammer
	Nov 20	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) James Smithers
Phainopepla	Nov 27	CHA-Smith Pt HW (1) Joseph Kennedy
Purple Finch	Nov 24	HAS-Bear Creek Pk (2) Jim Hinson, Dimitris Dimopoulos
Clay-colored Sparrow	Nov 28	GAL-SW of Hitchcock (1) Kyle O'Haver, Richard Liebler
Spotted Towhee	Nov 3	HAS-Rice Univ (1) Cin-Ty Lee, Mary Ann Beauchemin, Pedro Brandao Dias
Yellow-breasted Chat	Nov 21	CAM-Trosclair Rd (1) Paul Conover
Yellow-headed Blackbird	Nov 10	CHA-FM1985 nr TX124 (1) Ronnie Macko
Western Meadowlark	Nov 4-8	HAS-J P Landing Park (1) Ross Welborn, mult obs
	Nov 6	CAM-Rutherford Beach (1) Paul Conover
	Nov 21	CAM-Trosclair Rd (1) Paul Conover
Bullock's Oriole	Nov 9-25	HAS-Friendswood (1) Chris Bick, mult obs
Baltimore Oriole	Nov 12	HAS-Friendswood (1) Chris Bick
	Nov 14-29	HAS-Glenbrook Valley (1) Andrew Hamlett, James Rieman
Ovenbird	Nov 16	GAL-Dos Vacas Muertes (1) Robt Becker
	Nov 20	HAS-Baytown NC (1) Emily Blue
Nashville Warbler	Nov 25	HAS-Houston Arboretum (1) Sare Demaret
Hooded Warbler	Nov 5	HAS-Edith Moore (1) Justin Sandt
American Redstart	Nov 20-23	CAM-Willow Island (1) Paul Conover, mult obs

	Nov 28	GAL-Clear Creek area (1) Heather Linton
Magnolia Warbler	Nov 11-20	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) James Smithers, Alain Robert
	Nov 28	GAL-HI Smith Oaks (1) Wyatt Egelhoff
Yellow Warbler	Nov 3	HAS-River Grove Park (1) Lynn Forster
Yellow-thr. Warbler	Nov 13	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Paul Conover
	Nov 28	CAL-Lake Charles (1) David Booth
Prairie Warbler	Nov 21	CAM-Oak Grove Sanctuary (1) Paul Conover
	Nov 26	CHA-ANWR Skillern (1) Melissa Weaver, Charles Lyon
Black-thr. Green Warbler	Nov 8, 26	CAL-Lake Charles 10th St (1) James Smithers, Cyndi Simon
Canada Warbler	Nov 6	GAL-Ave Q 1/2 and 47th St (1) Kevin McDonald
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	Nov 5	HAS-Pine Gully Park (1) mult obs
Black-headed Grosbeak	Nov 27	HAS-El Franco Lee Park (1) Mary Goldsby

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

Birds that have Become Established in Southeast Texas since 1985

In this Sightings column, we try to report birds that are rare or very rare for the date of the observation. In a large fraction of cases, the bird in question is "out of season" – *i.e.* it is a migratory species that is either very early or very late when compared to the normal pattern of occurrence in Southeast Texas. Others are birds that truly meet the normal avian definition of "vagrant." A bird that has for some reason flown hundreds of miles away from where it is normally found either as a resident at some season or as a passage migrant.

While vagrants add excitement to birding, it is the repeated appearance of a species not previously part of the local avifauna that provides useful ornithological information. A few species exhibit a pattern of vagrancy that suggests that the same factor occurs more than once or twice a decade. This may reflect a weak genetic imprint of the "correct" migration direction. Indeed, vagrants that fly in a direction 90 degrees from correct path do seem to occur repeatedly as do a smaller number that fly in a direction 180 degrees from the correct path.

However, records of sightings such as presented here are often the first source of information on the expanding range of various species. Here, we discuss some species that have spread into Southeast Texas in the last 35 years. Most of these are expanding into the area from adjacent areas, and are perhaps not unexpected.

Black-bellied Whistling Ducks used to be confined to the Lower Rio Grande Valley, but starting in the 1990-95 period,

they moved up the coast and have continued up the Mississippi area.

Least Grebes were also found only in the Lower Rio Grande Valley until a few were found in 1995. Some further expansion northwards has occurred subsequently.

One newcomer that all birders and many other bird feeders are familiar with is the White-winged Dove. Locally, the bird was confined to southern Texas with the exception of a small stable population that existed in the court house square in Galveston. From 1980 on, the species expanded, reproduced profusely and is now found over both of the southern tier of the US, especially in the western half.

Two other more recent arrivals are likely in the process of becoming established. Very suddenly only a year or two ago, Limpkins, previously restricted to Florida, started appearing all along the Gulf coast to just west of Houston, and they may not be finished moving. They are regarded as restricted to areas where Apple Snail occur, and unfortunately, since the snails regarded as invasive, the Limpkins may be merely following the expansion of the snails. Interestingly, west of Florida, the Limpkins are concentrated south of the New Orleans area and in the Houston area.

Another species that seems destined to become part of the local bird population is the Brown Booby. The species now seems to prefer perches, often on oil and gas structures, in the near shore Gulf of Mexico. They were first found in 2015, and may be still increasing, although not rapidly.

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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.