

The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 29 No. 12

December 2023

2023-24 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. 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): Saturday, December 23, 2023

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. Meet 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. Compiler: Sheila Hebert (sheilakhebert@hotmail.com). Co-compiler: Phillip Hight.

Bolivar Peninsula (TXBP): Thursday, December 14, 2023

This count circle in Chambers County includes High Island and Anahuac NWR. Newcomers are welcome to join! Compilers this year are Steve Mayes and David Sarkozi. If you are interested in participating, please contact Steve Mayes at sgmayes@hotmail.com. The Houston Audubon coastal team will participate in this count which includes the High Island sanctuaries. Those interested in counting with us are encouraged to contact the respective count compilers, and/or Wyatt Egelhoff (wegelhoff@houstonaudubon.org).

Johnson Bayou - Southwest Louisiana (LAJB): Thursday, December 14, 2023

Johnson Bayou CBC has a rich history beginning in 1976 to the present. Though 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, Louisiana, is located 15 miles east of the bridge from Pleasure Island to Louisiana on Hwy. LA 82. Please contact Gary Kelley (garymke@sbcglobal.net, telephone 409-679-1616) for more information, assignments and directions.

Orange County (TXOC): Monday January 1, 2024.

Habitat covers marsh, woodlands, and the Cow Bayou watershed. The compiler this year is Lynn Jackson. Please contact her at vlbjax@yahoo.com if you would like to participate.

Turkey Creek (TXTC): Saturday, December 16, 2023

This count in Hardin and Tyler Counties includes the Turkey Creek and Hickory Creek Savannah Units of the Big Thicket National Preserve. Meet at 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. Compiler: Nancy Angell, nascanca@gmail.com. Co-compiler: Sheila Hebert, sheilakhebert@hotmail.com.

The Brown Pelican

Vol. 29, No.12 December 2023
Issue number 300

Golden Triangle
Audubon Society

Web Site for more information
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

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The Brown Pelican is published monthly except July by the Golden Triangle Audubon Society, P. O. Box 1292, Nederland, Texas 77627-1292
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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 – Thursday Dec 14
Bolivar Peninsula – Thursday Dec 14
Turkey Creek – Saturday Dec 16
Beech Creek – Saturday Dec 23
Orange County – Monday 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 18, 2024
Membership Meeting. Jeff Hodges "A Beginner's Experience in Texas".

Saturday, January 20, 2024.
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. Cell 1 -- the northernmost cell -- is the deepest and often has interesting ducks and grebes.

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. Take Highway 124 west (left) towards Fannett. At the first light, turn left 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 (right) on Walden Road. At the light at Highway 124, go straight ahead on Tyrrell Park Road and then 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

At the Annual meeting of Golden Triangle Audubon, copies of what amounts to our Annual Report was made available, along with the approved Income and Expenses report and Balance Sheet for the year ended 31 December year 2022, and interim reports for the year to 31 October 2023.. A slightly abridged version of the Annual Report is reproduced below and financial reports are on the following pages.

Golden Triangle Audubon Society Report on Activities Since November 2022

This has been an extremely busy year! We held Membership Meetings as usual, with good attendance, and Field Trips, led by Steve Mayes, to many local birding hotspots. The Field Trips were well received, usually with about 15 or more birders participating. Various members, especially Christine Sliva and Dania Sanchez responded to requests for attendance at activities, with children mostly, that focused on education about birds. The Golden Triangle Audubon Facebook page moderated by Jana Whittle with John Mariani as backup has been extremely active throughout the year. Other members helped on other activities described below, but our volunteer base is getting older and limited in available time and physical abilities, so we will always welcome new blood.

Since the Society was formed, assisting Texas Ornithological Society (TOS) in the maintenance and development of Sabine Woods has been a prime focus. Over the last few years, we have been anxious to conserve and make accessible the now 50-year-old oaks in the southern part of the tract west of the Sabine Woods property. While the Doornbos interests that own the land west, north and east of Sabine Woods are unwilling to sell any of the land, we and TOS were able to negotiate a lease of an approximately 6.7 acre-tract to the west (to protect the oaks) and an approximately 6.2 acre-tract to the east (that we hope to develop into a parking area). These areas were fenced.

Within the TOS owned land, we have cleared the island in the northwest pond and added a land bridge to make the interior accessible for birding. Just recently, we contracted for and completed an extension of the existing waterline to the west boundary, so that watering the trees we plan to plant in that area will be much easier, and we will be able to develop an additional water feature in the west of the Woods to further expand birding opportunities.

Volunteers have performed numerous tasks over the year. Several members, especially Dania Sanchez, Christine Sliva, and others dragged hoses to water the one- and two-year-old live oaks that would not otherwise have survived the exceptional drought over the summer and fall this year. Whenever some other needed task at the Woods was identified, Ashley Fuselier and Howard Davis were always there to complete it.

We continued the Orange County and Johnson Bayou (Louisiana), Christmas Bird Counts and continued the counts in the Big Thicket area – Turkey Creek north of Kountze and Beech Creek in the Steinhagen Lake/Martin Dies State Park area. One Christmas Bird Count in the area was significantly impacted by changes and eventually canceled. The LNG plants (see below) removed a significant amount of habitat from the Sea Rim SP count circle, and made access to much of what remained problematic. While access to the beach at Sea Rim SP itself was not affected, changing conditions rendered the beach along Texas Point Refuge virtually inaccessible. Access to J.D. Murphree WMA on land became very limited, The US Fish and Wildlife Service was unable to continue to provide the transportation assistance (boat, airboat and off-road transportation) that was essential to meaningful access to much of the count circle. Rather than attempt to carry out a count that would have been in no way comparable to the counts in the preceding 25 years, we reluctantly decided to cancel the count.

Of concern from a habitat perspective are the three LNG plants just north of Sabine Pass. When the plants are fully completed, the continuing impact will hopefully be relatively minimal. However, significant areas of habitat, mostly brackish marsh, were lost in constructing these plants, and we do not see that any significant mitigation has taken place. We have been monitoring these developments, and present here a summary inasmuch as the traffic created impacts access to areas along the shore and nearby for birding. These areas include Sabine Woods, Texas Point and McFaddin NWRs, Sea Rim State Park and J. D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area.

The first phase of the Chenier Partners Sabine Pass LNG plant just across the Sabine Neches Waterway in Louisiana has been in operation for some time now but the company has applied to expand the plant. The timeline for this has not been finalized.

The process of expanding the Golden Pass LNG (ExxonMobil) facility north of Sabine Pass and east of Highway 87 from an import facility into a liquefaction and export function is well under way. Construction activities will be winding down soon, but the "shakedown" process of getting the plant up and running continues. The first operational use of the plant is planned for the second half of 2024, Traffic is still heavy but can be expected to diminish somewhat as construction gives way to start up processes and then to regular production.

SEMPRA is in the early stages of developing its Port Arthur LNG facility. This is located south of the Intracoastal Waterway on both sides of the rerouted Highway 87 south to the Keith Lake cut. Construction traffic can be expected to increase during 2024 and continue through 2025. *[However, see update below]*

John A. Whittle, Secretary

Nov 15, 2023- The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit has removed an emissions permit for Semptra's Port Arthur LNG export terminal in Texas, and sent the permit application back to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) for new evaluation. Semptra said construction of the facility, which has most permits needed to construct the plant, will continue for now. The plant has export approval and has indicated it is planned to export LNG mostly to Europe. The court found that the TCEQ failed to impose the same emissions limits on the Port Arthur plant as on other projects, including the Rio Grande LNG project which is now under construction. The court said that in making those individualized determinations, TCEQ must demonstrate that it is treating permit applications consistently. It is not clear whether major changes will be required in the design of the plant and what effect there might be on the timeline for construction and completion. The Port Arthur Community Action Network brought the lawsuit challenging TCEQ,

Election Results

President: (2024-25) Steve Mayes

Treasurer (2024) Harlan Stewart

Directors-at-large (2024) Girish Doshi, Sherrie Gibson, John Haynes, Sheila Hebert, Thomas Hellweg, Gary Kelley, Dana Nelson, Christine Sliva

Vice-President (2024) Dania Sanchez

Secretary (2024) John Whittle

Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Income and Expense Summary -- Interim

January through October 2023

10:34 PM

11/14/23

Cash Basis

Jan - Oct '23

Ordinary Income/Expense

Income

Total Shared Revenue	561.50
TOS Sabine Woods Contributions	2,037.58
Contributions Income	
Total Sabine Woods Restricted	10,934.46
Unrestricted	650.00
Total Contributions Income	<u>11,584.46</u>
Miscellaneous Income	40.00
Newsletter Subscriptions	<u>1,300.00</u>
Total Income	<u>15,523.54</u>

Expense

Bank Service Charges	30.31
PO Box Rental	198.00
Total Program Expense - Meetings	184.40
Total Program Expense - Newsletter	1,566.42
Total Program Expense - Sabine Woods	10,834.82
Total Program Expense - Internet	323.97
Total Expense	<u>13,137.92</u>

Net Ordinary Income 2,385.62

Total Other Income 23.21

Net Income 2,408.83

Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Balance Sheet Summary

As of October 31, 2023

10:32 PM

11/14/23

Cash Basis

Oct 31, '23

ASSETS

Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	55,378.10
Total Current Assets	<u>55,378.10</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>55,378.10</u>

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Equity	55,378.10
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u>55,378.10</u>

Golden Triangle Audubon Society
Income and Expense Summary
January through December 2022

11:19 PM

01/23/23

Cash Basis

Jan - Dec '22

Income	
Total Shared Revenue	762.90
TOS Sabine Woods Contributions	2,542.40
Contributions Income	
Total Sabine Woods Restricted	11,468.00
Unrestricted	3,250.00
Total Contributions Income	14,718.00
Miscellaneous Income	4,020.00
Newsletter Subscriptions	1,930.00
Total Income	23,973.30
Expense	
PO Box Rental	198.00
Total Program Expense - Meetings	781.83
Total Program Expense - Newsletter	2,697.96
Total Program Expense - Sabine Woods	13,368.44
Total Program Expense - Internet	158.00
Total Expense	17,204.23
Net Ordinary Income	6,769.07
Total Other Income	24.86
Net Income	6,793.93

Golden Triangle Audubon Society
Balance Sheet Prev Year Comparison
As of December 31, 2022

	Dec 31, '22	Dec 31, '21
ASSETS		
Current Assets		
Checking/Savings		
EducationFirst FCU	52,219.27	45,425.34
Total Checking/Savings	52,219.27	45,425.34
Total Current Assets	52,219.27	45,425.34
TOTAL ASSETS	52,219.27	45,425.34
LIABILITIES & EQUITY		
Equity		
Fund Balance	45,425.34	37,303.63
Net Income	6,793.93	8,121.71
Total Equity	52,219.27	45,425.34
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	52,219.27	45,425.34

Field Trip to West Jefferson County – 18 November 2023

Our annual November Field Trip is one of the most anticipated of our regular scheduled trips. As with most of our field trips, it is held on the Saturday after the third Thursday of the month, in order to follow a couple of days after the Membership Meeting. November 18 is nearly as early in the month as the calendar can dictate. A lot of the interest in this field trip revolves around the arrival of our winter residents – Sandhill Cranes, raptors, sparrows, waterbirds and waterfowl – and there is always a question as to whether these winter residents have yet arrived, and the early date of the trip this year accentuated this concern. There was even more concern this year because Southeast Texas is in the throes of a severe drought which almost certainly affected the availability of the food on which these birds depend. There had been two or three “rain events” which have begun to break the drought, but were not nearly enough to return the situation to normal. We expected that the drought had had a serious impact of the availability of food both for the insectivores and the seed eating birds, something that we fear will require a complete annual cycle to return to normal, and the effects will indeed be felt at least through what passes for winter in Southeast Texas. The drought certainly has affected the vegetation, and a significant fraction of the trees that are sensitive to drought will not recover.

As far as Texas is concerned, the drought has been felt particularly hard in Southeast Texas. The official USDA/NOAA Drought Monitor has almost all of Jefferson County (and the counties immediately north) in extreme drought. A sliver of the easternmost part of the county and extending through essentially all of Louisiana shows to be in exceptional drought – the category more severe than extreme drought. The counties to the west of Southeast Texas including the Houston area received more rain, and were “only” in severe drought with some areas only in moderate drought, although the Austin and San Antonio areas also show as in extreme drought.

Fortunately, as far as the birds are concerned, our worst fears were not realized. The Sandhill Crane flock arrived a very few days before the trip in what appears to be normal numbers. Raptors had also arrived, and Red-tailed Hawks, Northern Harriers, and American Kestrels were found in normal to, in the case of kestrels, higher numbers than in the past few years. As far as the kestrels were concerned, this was very welcome news as there had been increasing concern over lower numbers in the past few years.

Savannah Sparrows rising from the roadside vegetation in healthy numbers suggested that, at least in this early part of the late fall and winter, there was adequate food for them. While we did find species associated with water, especially White Ibis, yellowlegs and dowitchers, in good numbers there was a very noticeable absence of ducks and geese. There were not as many ponds as usual, and very few that were accessible, but presumably the waterfowl found those that there were. However, early reports from duck hunting interests have indicated relatively low numbers of ducks so far, and when those who make money from duck hunting express pessimism, we know that the effect is very real.

This trip has a reputation for uncovering rare and unusual species, and this year’s iteration was no exception. Scouting the day before -- thank you Christine -- had discovered a Burrowing Owl, perched unconcernedly on a sturdy fence post on McDermand Road. This being close to the meeting point for the trip, as the last few participants assembled, we sent Sherrie out to carefully and quietly see if it was still there. While it was not on the fence post, Sherrie found it perched well protected just inside a concrete pipe serving as a culvert in the roadside ditch. So, we consolidated into as few vehicles as possible and drove slowly to a point short of the owl’s location. Although it was not quite as photogenic as on the previous day, everyone was able to see the bird well from a respectful distance. We understand it hides completely (inside the pipe?), and has not been seen every day, but it does perch on the fence post from time to time, so there is a good chance that it has found a satisfactory home base for the winter.

Even as we travelled to and from the location of the owl, we heard the unmistakable calls of Sandhill Cranes, and were able to see about 15 immediately. Everywhere we went during the day, we heard cranes and saw many relatively small groups. They never landed really close to any public road, but all trip participants were able to get reasonable views. Again this year, the area that is north of Willis Road, west of FM1406 and east of Ebner Road seems to be the location preferred by large numbers of the cranes, and may well be a principal feeding area, and perhaps a roosting area for at least some of the cranes. The major drainage in the area is shown on maps as the North Fork of Taylor Bayou, although it is not wide there, and there are many canals and irrigation ditches serving the area when in rice production. Appraisal district maps show the owner of two or three large tracts in that vicinity as the Bauer Real Estate Trust with a P.O. Box address in Houston, and a little further north, the Almond Ranch LLC with a P.O. Box address in Beaumont. Unfortunately, there are levees along the banks of most of the watercourses in the area and the birds are hidden from view after they land. We also saw many cranes -- the largest concentration that we found--in the area south of League and Willis Roads, just east of FM1406 that has also been favored in past years. Cranes on the ground in that area can be seen, with the east-west portion of League Road usually providing the best vantage area. Usually in past years, the cranes have departed to the southwest in the evenings. The area to which they were heading does not have any public roads. The consensus at the end of the trip was that there are likely close to 1000 cranes in the area, which is similar to recent years.

After the Burrowing Owl and initial cranes, we proceeded in our more or less usual manner to the wooded area at the intersection of Johnson Road and Heisig Road. This was perhaps a little less birdy than usual, although Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers were heard, as were flyover American Goldfinch. Much more obvious was a flock of about 12 American Robins, behaving as if they had just arrived. Although there are robins present in the county year-round, and the species does breed in residential areas in Beaumont and mid-county, it is usually mid-December or later before the

wintering robins become apparent in Jefferson County. They may, however, arrive in the Big Thicket area and in some years can be very numerous there. We then proceeded along Johnson Road which continues as League Road and then as Willis Road. This is where we saw the greatest number of cranes (south of League Rd). Other species in the area included White-crowned and Song Sparrows. Eastern Phoebe were in many locations. Meadowlarks were numerous, and ever since some Western Meadowlarks were confirmed last year on South China Road, we have recorded them as meadowlark species unless we either hear the calls or carefully study the yellow in the face and/or the amount of white in the tail feathers. We found the first of seven Loggerhead Shrikes on the day. We had been concerned in the past two or three years by what appeared to be a precipitous decline in shrike numbers, so this was most encouraging.

The area at the end of Willis Road where it turns into Ebner Road has been the territory of a pair of White-tailed Hawks, and one was seen. A bonus bird on Ebner Road was a young Bald Eagle, likely a second-year bird. Although American Crows are not unexpected in the area, a group of 15 was an unusually large number.

We continued on Ebner onto Liberty County Road 1011, and then north onto CR 1010. The objective on this occasion was a former rice field on the west side of the road, flooded, probably in the hope of attracting ducks. The bushes on the side of the road, mostly Yaupon, made viewing a little tricky. Initially, we were greeted by a good number of noisy yellowlegs species, with both Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs well represented. There were also other species: White Ibis, dark ibis, a sizable flock of resting dowitchers, a flock of 50 plus Dunlin, and even a Ring-billed Gull. A group of 20 Northern Pintails flew around the far reaches of the pond, and eventually landed. But towards the northern end of the field/pond, were four Wilson's Phalaropes, discovered on a previous day's scouting trip. Wilson's Phalaropes are "passage migrants" in the area and are very rare after the first week of October.

By then, it was time for a stop for lunch and other needs. After that, there was one other location that had been scouted – a moist field with shallow areas of standing water on Mason Road just west of McDermand Road. The previous day, there had been at least 1000 White Ibis feeding on it along with other shorebirds. There were still ibis – but only about 150 – and also Dunlin and Least Sandpipers and at least one Wilson's Snipe. But there were many fewer birds, even though the conditions were not significantly changed from the previous day. This was a classic example of how ephemeral aggregations of birds can be! This seems to be particularly true of shorebirds and waterbirds in general.

By then, the participants in the trip were beginning to disperse, but there were other birders in the area as news of the Burrowing Owl had spread. One such group reported some Common Ground Doves on McDermand Road. So many of field trip participants then proceeded down McDermand and were able to glimpse one or more of five Ground Doves. Local checklists indicate the species is uncommon in winter in our area, but in our experience, that overstates the abundance that has prevailed in recent years. It certainly is much more

common in South Texas, but relatively rare in Southeast Texas. However, the number of reports on eBird recently suggests that the population is currently increasing and/or expanding in range. These five birds were very easily spooked.

While in the area, birders found a nice collection of sparrows on what most of us regard as being part of Lawhon Road (and shown as such on most County maps), but as Pignut Road on other maps, including the Appraisal District's and most GPS maps. This refers only to the section between McDermand Road and South China Road. The sparrows were in the vicinity of the bridge over what seems to be part of Ground Bridge Gully (also labelled as Pignut Gully on some maps), and included White-crowned, Vesper and Field Sparrows.

These are classic example of what older birders will know as the Patagonia Picnic Table Effect. This occurs when the discovery of a rare bird induces other birders to come to the small area, where they find other unusual species. It takes its name from the discovery in June 1957 of Rose-throated Becards on a 0.3-mile section of Arizona Highway 82 adjacent to Sonoita Creek near Patagonia that had been bypassed to eliminate a sharp turn and converted into a rest area. In 1958, Thick-billed Kingbirds were found at the site. And much later (May 71) Black-capped Gnatcatchers were found!

All-in-all, this was a very successful field trip. The weather was nearly ideal. Virtually all the expected species were found, and good views were had by almost all participants. Several species rare in the area for November were found. The trip does not attempt to cover all habitat types, but concentrates on the open areas of the western part of the county. Wooded areas and wet areas are surveyed when they are nearby but are not the primary focus.

Species seen: (the numbers shown for the more common species are likely undercounts)

Gadwall (6), Northern Pintail (2), Pied-billed Grebe (3), Eurasian Collared-Dove (5), Common Ground Dove (5), Mourning Dove (11), Sandhill Crane (~1000), Killdeer (2+), Dunlin (200+), Least Sandpiper (200), Long-billed Dowitcher (~250), Wilson's Snipe (1), Wilson's Phalarope (4), Greater Yellowlegs (25+), Lesser Yellowlegs (15+), Ring-billed Gull (1), Great Blue Heron (2), Great Egret (3), White Ibis (131), White-faced/Glossy Ibis (38), Turkey Vulture (49), Black Vulture (3), Northern Harrier (10), Cooper's Hawk (1), Bald Eagle (1), White-tailed Hawk (1), Red-shouldered Hawk (3), Red-tailed Hawk (13), Red-tailed (Kriger's) Hawk (1), Burrowing Owl (1), Red-bellied Woodpecker (1), Downy Woodpecker (1), American Kestrel (8), Crested Caracara (2), Peregrine Falcon (1), Eastern Phoebe (18), Loggerhead Shrike (7), Blue Jay (1), American Crow (19), House Wren (3), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (1), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (2), American Robin (12), Northern Mockingbird (5), American Goldfinch (1+), Clay-colored Sparrow (1), Field Sparrow (1), White-crowned Sparrow (9), Vesper Sparrow (1), Savannah Sparrow (69), Song Sparrow (1), Eastern Meadowlark (9), meadowlark species (3), Red-winged Blackbird (189), Brown-headed Cowbird (47), Common Grackle (~300), Yellow-rumped Warbler (1), Northern Cardinal (1).

John A. Whittle

Bird Sightings – November 2023

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: A more modest list this month, perhaps not unexpected for November and especially a November with much of the area we cover in a severe drought.

Notable this month and for a couple of months now is the presence of a number of Common Ground Doves. Limpkins seem to still be spreading, and we no longer list birds at the well-established locations such as Sheldon Lake. Several Thayer's Gulls reported this month.

Local Counties (listed above)

Ruby-throated H'bird	Nov 9-30	ANG-Westwood Bend (1) Katrina Echols
Purple Gallinule	Nov 19-24	ANG-Lufkin (1) Gary Hunter
	Nov 6-24	JEF-TP (1) Patty Berry, Ethan Porter
Limpkin	Nov 4	ANG-Marion Ferry Park (1) Gary Hunter
	Nov 9-22	JEF-TP (1) Greg Richardson, Cameron Kerl, Gary and Kathy Hunter
	Nov 20	HAI-Johns Lake Rd, Silsbee (1) Johnny Johnson
	Nov 20	TYL-Magnolia Ridge Park (1)
Burrowing Owl	Nov 17-30	JEF-McDermid Rd (1) Christine Sliva, mult obs
Black-thr. Green Warbler	Nov 7	SAB-Hemphill (1) Davi Bell
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	Nov 21	HAI-Kountze (1) Kelly Walker

Nearby Counties

Eurasian Wigeon	Nov 4	CHA-Anahuac NWR Shoveler Pond
American Flamingo	Nov 6	CAM-Broussard Lake Hwy 27 5 mi N of Creole (1) Justin Bosler, Greg Richardson
	Nov 19	CAM-Creole (1) Matt Franks, Randy Frederick
Common Ground Dove	Nov 9	GAL-Texas City Marathon area (1) Allen Hardee
	Nov 11	GAL- Campeche Cove Animal Hospital (1) Ross Foreman
	Nov 11-12	HAS-Morgan New Washington Prairie Park (1) mult obs
	Nov 20-24	GAL-Settegast Rd (1) Lance Pawlik
	Nov 20	GAL-S of FM646/FM2004 (1) Richard Liebler, WE
	Nov 20	HAI-Warren Ranch (1) Timothy White
Groove-billed Ani	Nov 24	CAM-Johnson Bayou Long Beach Rd (1) Eric Ripma
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Nov 11	CAM-Grand Chenier (1) Esme Rosen
Lesser Nighthawk	Nov 29	GAL-HI Smith Oaks (1) Grace Yaros
Calliope Hummingbird	Nov 8	HAS- N of West Houston Airport (1) Timothy White
Buff-bellied Hummingbird	Nov 22-25	CHA-Smith Pt Hawk Watch (1) David Hanson, Joseph Kennedy, John Berner, mult obs
American Golden Plover	Nov 21	CAM-Lacassine Wildlife Loop (1) Eric Ripma
Wilson's Plover	Nov 24-25	GAL-Bolivar Flats (1) Mike Austin, Judy Behrens, Kyle O'Haver, mult obs
Wilson's Phalarope	Nov 17-22	LIB-CR1010 (5) John and Jana Whittle, mult obs

California Gull	Nov 12-13	GAL-San Luis Pass Rd (1) Dean Silvers, Richard Liebler
Iceland (Thayer's) Gull	Nov 11	GAL-Apfel Park (1) James Rieman
	Nov 23-24	GAL-High Island/Bolivar Flats (1) mult obs
	Nov 21-28	GAL-Ash Like (1) James Rieman, mult obs
	Nov 29	GAL-San Luis Pass (1) Ross, Richard Liebler
Iceland Gull	Nov 11	GAL-Rollover Pass (1) Steve Glover, Greg Cook, mult obs
	Nov 19	GAL-Texas City Dike (1) Richard Liebler
Brown Booby	Nov 19	CHA-ANWR Frozen Pt (9)
Harris's Hawk	Noc 25	CAL-Sulphur (1) Brad Lirette, Mel C.
Burrowing Owl	Nov 9	CHA- Anahuac NWR Hackberry Trail (2) Wayne Washam
	Nov 6	GAL-Bolivar Flats 17 th St (1) Dimitris Dimopoulos
	Nov 4-6	GAL-Rettillon Rd (1) mult obs
Ladder-backed W'pecker	Nov 20	GAL- S of FM646/FM2004 (1) Richard Liebler, WE
Least Bittern	Nov 6	CAM--Broussard Lake Hwy 27 5 mi N of Creole (1) Justin Bosler
Greater Pewee	Nov 6-26	HAS-Bear Creek Park (1) Jim Hinson mult obs
Eastern Wood-Pewee	Nov 11	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Mel C
Say's Phoebe	Nov 4-11	CAM-Lacassine NWR Wildlife Loop (1) Judson Lassiter mult obs
Tropical Kingbird	Nov 19-20	GAL-Pelican Is (1) mult obs
Red-eyed Vireo	Nov 11	CAM-Grand Chenier (1) Esme Rosen
	Nov 13	CAM-Johnson Bayou (1) Esme Rosen
Cliff Swallow	Nov 9	GAL-HI Smith Oaks (1) WE, Grace Varos, Rachel Myers
Swainson's Thrush	Nov 3	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Robert Gearhardt
Wood Thrush	Nov 6	Russ Pitman Park (1) Mary Beauchemin\
Clay-colored Sparrow	Nov 12	CAM-Johnson Bayou (1) Esme Rosen
Lark Bunting	Nov 20-29	HAS-Warren Ranch/Mound Road (1) mult obs
	Nov 28	HAS-San Felipe Area (1) Evan Chastain
Harris's Sparrow	Nov 21-28	GAL-Campeche Cove Anim. Hosp (1) mult obs
Green-tailed Towhee	Nov 4-20	HAS-Sharp Road area (2) mult obs
Dickcissel	Nov 4	HAS-San Jacinto Battlegnd (2) Dale Wolck
	Nov 2	HAS-Atascosita area (1) Dorothy Hoffman
	Nov 12	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Esme Rosen

Western Meadowlark	Nov 3	HAS-Willow Waterhole (1)
	Nov 3-4	HAS-Spaceport Houston (1) Richard Rulander, Andrew Hamlett
MacGillivray's Warbler	Nov 12-21	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Esme Rosen, Eric Ripma
Hooded Warbler	Nov 9	HAS-Buffalo Bayou Park (1) Shawn Stetzel
	Nov 28	HAS-San Felipe Area (1) Evan Chastain
American Redstart	Nov 11	CAM-Chalkley Rd (1) Esme Rosen
	Nov 12	CAM-Johnson Bayou (1) Esme Rosen
Magnolia Warbler	Nov 24	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Eric Ripma
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	Nov 7	HAS-El Franco Lee Park (1) Shannon E
Western Tanager	Nov 8	GAL-Friendswood (1) Linda Zeller
	Nov 12	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Esme Rosen

	Nov 9	GAL-Friendswood (1) Linda Zeller
Black-headed Grosbeak	Nov 27	GAL-HI Boy Scout Woods (1) Richard LiebDicksellNov 12 CAM-Peveto Woods (2) Esme Rosen
Blue Grosbeak	Nov 23-27	GAL- Campeche Cove Anim. Hosp (1) Robt Becker, Richard Liebler, 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; SM – Steve Mayes, SRSP – Sea Rim State Park; SW – Sabine Woods; TP – Tyrrell Park including Cattail Marsh; TYL – Tyler County; WE – Wyatt Egelhoff; 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.