

The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 31 No 9

September 2025

**Membership Meeting
Thursday September 18, 2025 7:00 p.m.
Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont**

A Birding Trip to Cuba

Steve Mayes

Steve will talk about his birding trip to Cuba 2/27-3/1/2025. This was a short trip covering only a small area of the country between Havana and the Zapata peninsula in Matanzas Province, including the Cienaga de Zapata, a famous large natural wetland reserve on the southern coast of Cuba about 125 miles south of Havana, which is on the northern coast. Despite the limited area covered, 133 species were observed including a number of Cuban and West Indian endemics. These included such species as Cuban Trogon, Cuban Tody, Blue-headed Quail-Dove, Great Lizard-Cuckoo and the world's smallest bird — the Bee Hummingbird. Steve will also speak about travelling in Cuba and the special travel restrictions for Americans in Cuba.

We plan to have the doors open no later than 6:00 p.m., and have light refreshments available by about 6:15 p.m.

The Brown Pelican

Vol. 31, No.9 September 2025
Issue number 320

Golden Triangle
Audubon Society

Web Site for more information
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (2025)

President

Steve Mayes

Vice-President

Dania Sanchez

Treasurer

Harlan Stewart

Secretary

John Whittle

Directors-at-Large

Joey Choate

Girish Doshi

Sherry Gibson

John Haynes

Thomas Hellweg

Johnny Johnson

Gary Kelley

Greg Reynolds

Christine Sliva

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Program

Jana Whittle

Field Trips

Steve Mayes

Conservation

Gary Kelley

Membership, Publicity

Denise Kelley

Education

Volunteer needed

Webmaster

Jeff Pittman (geojeff@geojeff.org)

Facebook Administrators

John Mariani

Jana Whittle

Newsletter Editor

John Whittle

(gtaudubon@aol.com)

The Brown Pelicans

published monthly except July by
the Golden Triangle Audubon
Society, P. O. Box 1292, Nederland,
Texas 77627-1292
email: gtaudubon@aol.com

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.

Thursday September 18, 2025.

Membership Meeting. Details on page 1 and on the web site.

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. The Garden Center is on the left. For Cattail Marsh, 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.

Saturday September 20, 2025.

Jefferson County Fall Migration

Count. Contact John Whittle at gtaudubon@aol.com for details or to volunteer to help. Even if you can only participate during the morning, your help will be welcome. These counts have been conducted since 1995, and thus form a valuable historical record,

Saturday September 27, 2025. Field Trip to Smith Point Hawkwatch.

Note that again this month, our Field Trip will not be on the Saturday immediately following the Membership Meeting but one week later than that so as to be nearer the date when Broad-winged Hawk migration has peaked in recent years.

To reach the Smith Point Hawkwatch site from Winnie, take Highway 124 south towards High Island. After 12 miles, turn right on FM1985 and follow it about 14 1/2 miles until it meets FM562. Follow FM562 14 miles to Smith Point. Continue straight until almost reaching the bay, and turn left, bearing left again to the parking area next to the Hawkwatch Tower on the Candy Abshier Wildlife Management

Area. It takes at least 90 minutes from the Golden Triangle to reach the site, more if you stop to bird. This Field Trip is much more a come and go as you wish trip, and help on hawk identification is always available on the tower during Hawk Watch season!

Our leaders will be there from about 8:30 a.m. on September 27. Hopefully, this will be close to a peak in this year's Broad-winged Hawk migration, but there will always be some hawks. Accipiters, especially Sharp-shinned Hawks, tend to pass over Smith Point early in the morning, often concentrated in the 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. time period, while the Broad-winged Hawks tend to come later in the morning, rarely before 10:00 a.m. Any day from mid-September through mid or late October should produce a good number of migrating hawks.

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

The Smith Point Hawk Watch tower is staffed by Gulf Coast Bird Observatory in cooperation with Hawk Watch International from August 15 through November 30 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Historically, the peak of Broad-wing Hawk migration was September 25, although in recent years at Smith

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.

it has tended to be later and less uniform, and sometimes large numbers of Broad-wings have passed through in the first few days of October.

The days immediately following a cold front usually have a north wind, and more migrating hawks of all species pass through on those days.

Previous years' results are at <http://hawkcount.org>, so you can do your own analysis! The exact peak day probably depends more on the weather on the migration path from Pennsylvania down to east Texas, and particularly on the two or three days after the passage of a cold front. However, predicting is very difficult as there are relatively few Hawk Watches between Pennsylvania and Texas to let us know where the *en route* hawks have paused. Almost all migratory hawks over Smith Point come from areas north of Pennsylvania. Broad-wings breed over almost all of the eastern half of the United States, including the Golden Triangle and the southern tier of Canada, even as far west as British Columbia, but those from some of the western parts of the range tend to pass over the narrow strip of land between Lake Huron and Lake Erie and thus over the Detroit area. These birds continue south and join up with the eastern birds as they approach Corpus Christi.

For more information, contact our Field Trip Chair Steve Mayes (gtaudubon@aol.com).

Saturday October 4, 2025. Sabine Woods Work Day. (Tentative date). We plan to do our usual fall routine maintenance. We will be there from about 7:30 a.m. Normally, we work until about noon.

We will be there from about 7:30 a.m. Normally, we work until about noon. We will supply cold water and soft drinks and hope to be able to provide sandwiches for lunch.

Brush-hogging of the open areas is planned to occur before then but as usual, the side of the trails will need attention,

We have a limited number of hand tools but if you have loppers or clippers, please bring them. We may need a chain saw, but probably only one. Bring insect repellent!

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

Thursday October 16, 2025. Membership Meeting. Christine Brouwer will present a program on her recent trip to Surat in the State of Gujarat, India on the Arabian Sea coast about 200 miles north of Mumbai (Bombay)

Saturday October 18, 2025. Field Trip to Sabine Woods. Leader Steve Mayes. Meet at Sabine Woods, which is 4.1 miles west of Sabine Pass on the north side of Highway 87 at 7:30 a.m. or join the trip in progress in the woods later. Waterproof footwear will probably be a good idea, especially if it is at all wet from previous rain or just heavy early morning dew. Bring mosquito repellent just in case. There are few services available on weekends in Sabine Pass, and no gasoline is available.

October 18 is towards the end of fall songbird migration, but often brings a good variety of birds. A cold front may drive down the last of the warblers and the first big push of wintering birds. Some of our winter birds may be arriving, and often the woodland species that winter in the Big Thicket overshoot a little at first. In some past years, this has included Red-breasted Nuthatch and Brown Creeper. There are always interesting birds at Sabine Woods! Birding Sabine Woods is relatively easy walking.

Thursday November 20, 2025 Annual Meeting and Elections

The Annual Meeting of Golden Triangle Audubon Society will take place on November 21, 2024 in the Garden Center, Tyrrell Park. At this meeting, we will hold elections for all Officers and all At-Large Board positions. To nominate someone for any position contact, the chair of the Nominating Committee. Steve Mayes. Please in the first instance email him at gtaudubon@aol.com.

Nominations from the floor will be in order but must be accompanied by affirmation, either orally at the meeting, or in writing, that the candidate is willing to serve.

We are also always seeking contributions to the running of the Society in the form of new volunteers, as we must have new blood. We will be happy to arrange for you to act as an understudy for a year (or two).

If you prefer to contribute in the form of habitat work at Sabine Woods, we can arrange that. Most of the work can be accomplished in the cooler months!

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 2026 dues. You may pay at any membership meeting (checks preferred) or use the subscription/membership blank on the back page. Dues paid in September will cover through the end of 2026.

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 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 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 bring them to our attention.

We would very much encourage you receive the Brown Pelican electronically as this saves paper, cost (including ever increasing postal costs) and volunteer time. To start that, simply send an email to gtaudubon@aol.com from the address you want us to use.

29th Annual Great Texas Birding Classic Results

The Great Texas Birding Classic is the biggest and longest birdwatching tournament. This event coincides with spring migration with teams choosing a date between April 15 and May 15. Registration fees raise money for Texas bird conservation project grants. Texas is divided into nine regions. In some categories there are separate competitions in each region with the result that there are about 45 categories of results" listed on the [Texas Parks and Wildlife \(.gov\) website](#).

The Early History of Sabine Woods

During a recent Texas Ornithological Society Meeting/Field Trip, a few copies of the Texas Birds Spring-Summer 2000 issue were available, and a number of current GTAS members suggested that it would be worthwhile to republish an article on Sabine Woods in that issue that describes the early history of the sanctuary.

We can only do the subject justice in the digital version of the Newsletter, where we can include the color images and are not limited by the space constraints inherent in the print edition.

Following this introduction, we present the original article from the newsletter. (We have removed contact information and phone numbers that are no longer valid.) Our scanning of the original is not perfect because on two of the pages, there are photos that are spread over two pages.

To serve as a preface to the article, we are including a few screen shots of historical Google Earth aerial photos of Sabine Woods from Dec 1938, Sep 1974, Feb 1989 (close to when TOS purchased the Woods) and the most current one available, Aug 2024.

If you go to the Google Earth website, you can find many others from the eighties and subsequently. (Zero in on Sabine Woods and then use the history button to bring up

a slider that you can use to bring up the available aerial shots.)

Here is a very brief outline of the major projects completed since TOS acquired ownership of the Woods. As the article notes, the oaks to the west and to the east of the original main woods were planted in 1989-90 soon after TOS acquired the property. It is now difficult to tell where the "old" Woods end and the 1989 oaks begin.

As one of the projects selected by one of the winners of the Great Texas Birding Classic in 2010 or 2011, more oaks were planted in the area to the east of the east part of the Woods. We supplemented these with some mulberry trees propagated by Jim Anding from local mulberries. In order to further expand the wooded area, we have planted more oaks in the area north of the main oak motte, and more recently, some in the northwest section of the area owned by TOS. TOS has leased from Doornbos the areas east and west from the TOS owned property lines to the Doornbos property lines with authorization to construct a parking area in the east tract and to plant more oak trees in the west tract.

To supplement the original water feature, we have added water features in the southern part of the 1989 east tract, and more recently, two additional water features west of the west end of the pond.

TOS SANCTUARY

Sabine Woods

Sabine Woods photos by John A. Whittle
Birds in Sabine Woods photos by Kenneth Sztraky

CHENIER: A place where oaks grow. Cheniers (shuh-neers) are long, narrow beach ridges that rise from coastal wetlands. These low "islands" of sand and shell stretch from the central Louisiana coast westward to near Galveston, Texas, but they are best developed in southwest Louisiana, where as many as five series of ridges parallel a 110-mile shoreline. Early French inhabitants named the tree-covered ridges after the live oaks that grew abundantly there, hence the term "chenier," from the French word *chêne* or oak. The marsh-and-ridge complex of southwest Louisiana and southeast Texas is one of only three extensive chenier plain systems in the world.

—from *A Wetland Biography:
Seasons on Louisiana's Chenier Plain*
(1998) by Gay M. Gomez

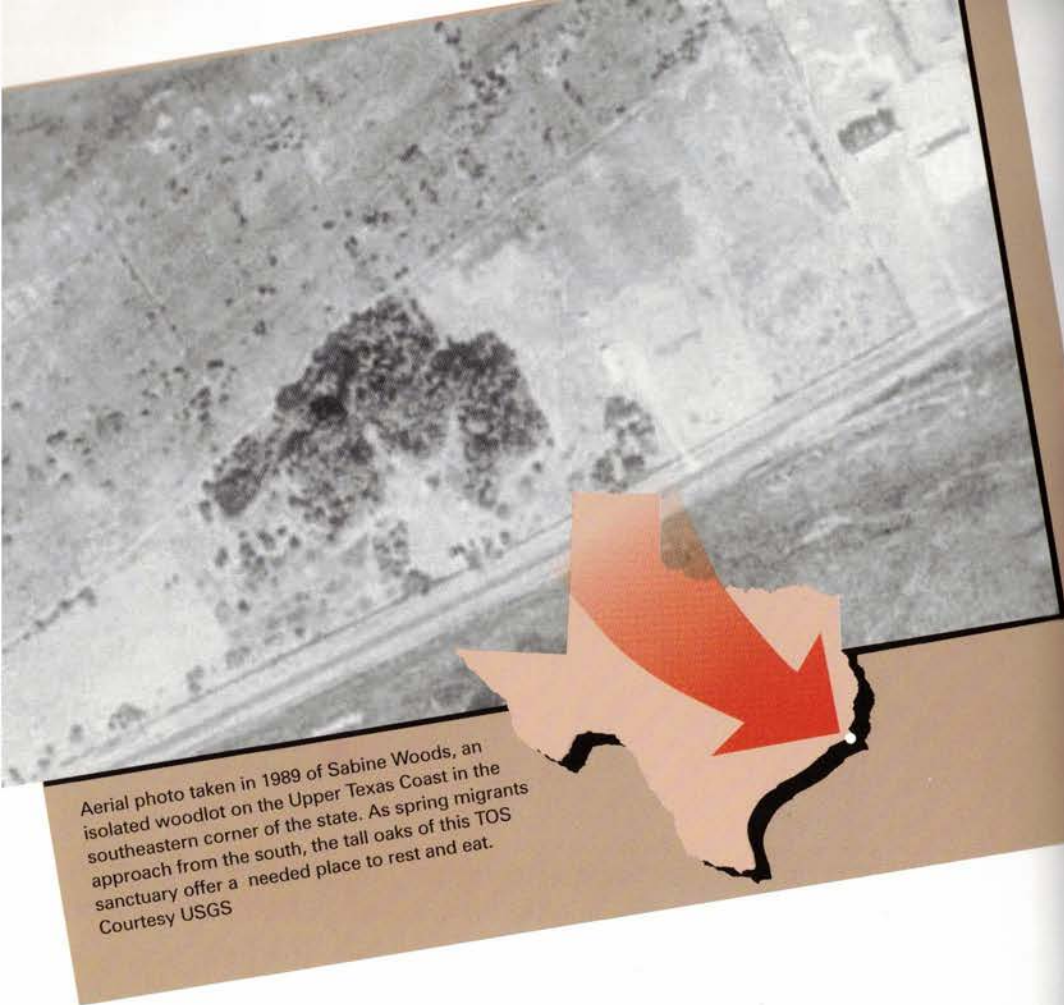
by JOHN A. WHITTLE



Prothonotary Warbler

TO APPRECIATE the importance of Sabine Woods and similar woodlot sanctuaries on the Chenier Plain of the Upper Texas Coast and Louisiana, one needs to understand the geography of Neotropical passerine, or songbird, migration and the vegetation found along the Gulf Coast. Sabine Woods is more or less an isolated woodlot, largely comprised of live oak with some hackberry and mulberry trees. It is located 4.1 miles west of the town of Sabine Pass, on the north side of State Highway 87 in Jefferson County, about one-half mile from the Gulf of Mexico. Although there are other stands of oaks in and around Sabine Pass, very few of them have much underbrush, which is desirable, and most are in close proximity to dwellings. To the west, some modest-sized willows and mulberries grow in nearby Sea Rim State Park, but the next significant area of trees is at High Island, another twenty miles west along the coast.

To a Neotropical migrant reaching the coastline of Texas in the spring, after a 600- to 700-mile non-stop crossing from the Yucatan Peninsula, the tall oaks of Sabine Woods may represent the only friendly habitat it can see as



Aerial photo taken in 1989 of Sabine Woods, an isolated woodlot on the Upper Texas Coast in the southeastern corner of the state. As spring migrants approach from the south, the tall oaks of this TOS sanctuary offer a needed place to rest and eat.
Courtesy USGS

History

As Ted Eubanks has pointed out, before 1975 no land along the upper coast was owned by interests dedicated to conservation. Today, almost all the land in the coastal strip from Texas Point—the extreme southeast corner of Texas—to High Island is either in a national wildlife refuge or in Sea Rim State Park. And the most important woodlots—High Island, Sabine Woods, and Peveto Beach Woods in Louisiana—are owned by birding organizations.

In the 1970s, the occupants of the one or two mobile homes on the Sabine Woods site tolerated occasional birders in the woods, known locally as Grimm's Woods. Even though cattle regularly roamed the woods, which greatly reduced the underbrush, it became clear that this was an important migrant bird rest stop.

The land was originally settled in the late nineteenth century by the Broussard family from south Louisiana. Gertrude Broussard, the matriarch of the family, planted the live oaks that are now the centerpiece of the sanctuary using acorns she carried from Louisiana. At some point, the Doornbos family, who still own much of the surrounding marsh, acquired an interest in the land, and Mr. and Mrs. Grimm purchased part interest in the land from one of the Doornbos heirs. At this point the 300-acre tract was undivided—all owned the land in common. Mr. Grimm's employment transfer to a different part of the state ended his plans to build a home there.

In 1989, TOS, under the leadership of Robert Benson and Ted Eubanks, bought the Grimms' interest in the land. Then, after more than a year of negotiations, TOS became the outright owner of the 30 acres that comprise the sanctuary today. The purchase price was just over \$50,000, which was financed through issuance of tax-exempt bonds, the last of which were retired in 1999. Through the good offices of Dave Peterson of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, enhancement funds were provided, which enabled the property to be fenced, a new pond and wetland to be created in the northwest corner, and 250 four-inch diameter live oaks to be planted in the areas to the west and east of the main woodlot. The area outside the woods was mowed.

Managing the Sanctuary

Little else was done to the property until 1995, by which time it was difficult to fight one's way through the luxuriant growth into the woods. The Golden Triangle Audubon Society then offered to help maintain the sanctuary. This has mostly consisted of volunteer work by GTAS members who have also negotiated for some outside help. Supplies have been purchased or donated.

First, the main "trail" into and around the woodlot proper was recreated by bushhogging. Then we tackled the removal of old oil field debris—barrels mainly, but also an old trailer.

A huge pile was assembled just inside the gate. Dan Dinkler of McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge arranged for the Sonat Corporation's Clam Lake Operations unit to remove the debris and dispose of it through their metal recycling program.

Since then, ongoing projects of TOS and the Golden Triangle Audubon Society include maintenance of the trails through the woods, Chinese tallow eradication (the Chinese tallow is a non-native, invasive tree), and cutting of the prolific mustang grape vines, which will strangle the mulberries and even the 100-year old oaks. Tallow eradication is approximately three-quarters complete, although an annual "mop-up" of newly sprouted saplings will probably always be needed. With help from Precinct 3 County Commissioner Waymon Hallmark, we have been able to do more bushhogging to open up access to the "new" oaks and other outlying areas of the sanctuary. Recently, as one of the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail enhancements, a paved parking area was completed just outside the gate, and a badly needed new gate installed.

A master plan for management of Sabine Woods is currently being developed to address the needs of the sanctuary. The plan includes seeking funds and volunteers to 1) maintain woodland habitats and continue to control



Scarlet Tanager

invasive species that displace more desirable plants for wildlife, 2) create a network of trails for management, research, and recreational purposes, 3) provide minimal facilities for managers and users, and 4) develop partnerships with the conservation community to better manage the Chenier Plain, of which Sabine Woods is a part.

If you visit the sanctuary, you will find that the original woods planted by Gertrude Broussard comprise perhaps one-fifth of the total area of the sanctuary and are commonly divided into three main sections. In the center section is a huge mulberry tree, almost as tall as the largest live oaks. A pond or slough runs through the woods on the north edge of the woodlot proper, and another oval pond with a center island was created in 1989-90. These ponds are dependent on rainwater and dry up completely during the summer in dry years. The areas of new live oaks are coming along nicely, and the trees are now big enough to interest some migrating species.

There are trails throughout the sanctuary. Except for the main trail around the outside of the woods, most of the other outside trails are deliberately varied from year to year to help pre-

A very large mulberry tree grows along with 100-year-old live oaks in the interior of the original woods. The oaks were planted from acorns brought from Louisiana by the original settlers in the late nineteenth century.

vent undesirable woody vegetation and vines from becoming established. The trails are largely used for sanctuary maintenance, but they do give birders access to all parts of the sanctuary.

Birds at Sabine Woods

The first real evidence of migration at Sabine Woods usually comes in mid-March, when the "early" warblers, such as Prothonotary, Yellow-throated, and Hooded Warblers, Northern Parula, and Louisiana Waterthrush, begin to pass through. Prothonotary and Hooded Warblers especially tend to come in waves; one day there are many, the next day there may be none. By early April, migration is in full swing, and Worm-eating, Black-throated Green, Kentucky, and Blue-winged Warblers are often present, along with Orchard Orioles.

The last two weeks of April and the first few days of May represent the peak of spring migration, when the too-numerous-to-list warbler species are joined by vireos, thrushes, tanagers, grosbeaks, and the early flycatchers. Painted and Indigo Buntings are common in the overgrown weedy areas in the north part of the sanctuary. Cuckoos are seen regularly, mostly Yellow-billed, with the number of Black-billed varying from year to year. In very late April and early May, Magnolia Warblers



Hooded Warbler

begin to come through along with Chestnut-sided and Bay-breasted Warblers, the latter species often present for just two or three days but in large numbers. Flycatchers become more numerous.

At the tail end of migration in mid-May, Canada Warblers and perhaps a few *Empidonax* flycatchers may be seen. As long as the "new" pond holds water, it attracts a variety of shore and water birds, including in recent years one or two pairs of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, which depart when the water level drops. Yellow-crowned Night-Herons (mostly immatures) and Green Herons can be found roosting in the trees round the central pond in April. And at any time during migration, there is always the possibility of seeing really unusual birds, like the Hermit Warbler and Yellow-green Vireo, both of which appeared in 1999.

Summer on the sanctuary is a quieter time

and the heat and sometimes abundant deer flies can limit the amount of birding in the sanctuary. Known nesting species include Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Painted Bunting, and Orchard Oriole along with the year-round residents such as Northern Cardinal, Blue Jay, Northern Mockingbird, Northern Bobwhite, Carolina Wren, Common Yellowthroat, and Downy Woodpecker. Whether the Barn Owls that are seen regularly nest on the sanctuary or elsewhere is not known. A pair of White-tailed Kites successfully fledged two young (in early September!) from a nest at the top of one of the oaks at the entrance gate in 1994 but has not subsequently returned.

Fall migration is much more drawn out, lasting from mid-August through early November. While the massive groundings of migrants that occur when northbound birds encounter adverse weather over the coast have no coun-



The main entrance into Sabine Woods in September 1999 when growth was luxuriant. Trails run throughout the sanctuary.

terpart in the fall, Sabine Woods seems to be a gathering point for southbound migrants on the upper coast. With the young of the year also migrating, there may be two or three times as many southbound birds as there are northbound in the spring. But the numbers seen on the coast overall in the fall do not come close to the spring totals.

In late August and early September, however, flycatchers, including Olive-sided, Great Crested, and *Empidonax* flycatchers, are usually much more numerous than in the spring. By October, they are nearly all gone except for Eastern Wood-Pewees and a few Least and Great Crested Flycatchers. Chuck-will's-widows are certainly present in the spring but are particularly common in September. Canada Warblers, one of the last to arrive and first to leave North America, are usually common early in the month, and Mourning Warblers are often seen in September as well. October is the best warbler month in the fall, and some spe-

cies are much easier to find than in the spring. It is a rare October that passes without a Black-throated Blue Warbler being seen in the woods, and many feel that Wilson's Warblers are easier to find as well. Thrushes, tanagers, and grosbeaks also come through in October. Throughout September and October, large numbers of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds use the woods, often more interested in the sap at the base of the acorns of the oldest oaks than in the flowers, although large expanses of lantana and several good stands of Turk's cap are not ignored.

Typically, a final push of straggling warblers in early November marks the end of fall migration.

Late fall can be an interesting time in the sanctuary. The first strong cold front often causes species that normally winter north in the Pinewoods to overshoot and arrive on the coast. Not being genetically programmed to cross water, they find Sabine Woods and set down. Large flocks of American Robins may stay for a few days before moving (back up to

the Pinewoods or on to the west?). Species such as Red-breasted Nuthatch and Brown Creeper have also been recorded, and Golden-crowned Kinglets are almost an annual occurrence. Groove-billed Anis have been seen in the fall but are rare.

Over-wintering migrant species include White-throated Sparrow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Orange-crowned Warbler, and the ubiquitous Yellow-rumped Warbler. The Yellow-rumped is one of the few species to use the Chinese tallow tree. Apparently, it can digest the wax that coats the seeds as easily as it can the wax that coats some native fruits. It will be interesting to see if wintering populations of Yellow-rumped Warbler in Sabine Woods decline as the tallow eradication program progresses. (There are numerous other food sources for them in southeast Texas and more than enough tallows elsewhere!) Understanding Yellow-rumped Warbler movements is not easy, but it seems that by February, birds from farther south are already passing through the woods and the surrounding area. Yet seeing one in early May is not unusual either.

Nomadic flocks of Cedar Waxwings roam southeast Texas in winter, but one flock always seems to find the large mulberry tree in Sabine Woods in April and stays until mid-May. Sedge Wrens appear to winter in the overgrown areas in the northern part of the sanctuary, although we don't see them very often until the males start to sing in April.

As with any intensively birded area, a number of exceptional extralimital, or out-of-range, species have been recorded in Sabine Woods. In addition to those already mentioned for 1999, there are records of a Fork-tailed Flycatcher on April 25, 1993, and a Hooded Oriole on April 11 and May 14, 1995.

Other wildlife on the sanctuary includes several rabbits, numerous armadillo, and for the last few years a bobcat, which slowly is becoming less afraid of humans. Squirrels have recently colonized the woods. Occasionally, a coyote is seen but probably does not live there. Cottonmouth snakes are quite numerous and seen frequently, along with several other snake species. Mosquitoes are, unfortunately, omnipresent and sure to be noticed almost all year-round. Deer flies can be a problem in some areas—normally outside the old woods—but usually only in summer. Fire ant control is not entirely successful, but ticks and chiggers are not ordinarily a problem.

The Future

As long as highway 87, which parallels the coast, is impassible between High Island and Sea Rim State Park—and it is impassible—Sabine Woods is likely to offer uncrowded coastal woodlot birding at its best. But the sanctuary must also be managed to protect the birds using it. Keeping the sanctuary habitat in the best possible state and ensuring that future generations of birds and birders alike will have this woodlot to use and enjoy will take thoughtful planning and careful execution. ➤



Sabine Woods

September 1974



Sabine Woods Sanctuary, Texas...




S Gulfway Dr



Sabine Woods

February 1989

Legend

-  Breezy Oaks RV Park
-  NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
-  Sabine Woods

Breezy Oaks RV Pa

S Gulfway Dr

87

Sabine Woods Sanctuary, Texas...

87

Google Earth

Image U.S. Geological Survey



300 ft

Sabine Woods

2025



Sabine Woods Sanctuary, Texas...

S Gulfway Dr

Bird Sightings –August 2025

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: This is the shortest list we have ever had to present. This does give us an opportunity to discuss the criteria we use to select. At the beginning of this year, we decided to only include early or late migrant species if the bird was at least two weeks beyond the “normal” passage period. Previously, we had used a one-week criterion, but increasingly, we felt that the checklist we used was too restrictive. The purpose of this change was to restrict inclusion to those birds that were more than modestly early or late. We do not blame the compilers of the Outdoor Nature Club Upper Texas Coast Checklist as they did not have the help of a growing lists of sightings in eBird. We accept that this still captures some birds that are essentially crippled during their stay in the local area and are physically unable to continue. It is probably good to help identify those birds that become disabled, because eBird will report them and that helps detect and identify the probable reason for such birds being out of normal season especially if they remain in a very

small area. This applies particularly to fall trans-Gulf migrants, where their condition likely prevents them from following their genetically imprinted urge to proceed across the very large body of water that is the Gulf.

In many ways, the reduction in the number of birds in this list validates our decision. Our goal is to include principally birds that a local birder would not normally see locally. In the current list, Cattle Tyrant and Gray Kingbird would epitomize what we are trying to show. Without the changes we made, this column was running to two nearly full pages which we considered excessive.

If a reader is looking for “out of season” records, eBird offers a number of methods to find them. Setting the “Alerts” feature (by county) will report any species that is outside the norm as set by the regional reviewer responsible for that county. But the criteria are not uniform so a bird that qualifies for inclusion in one county may not qualify in a close neighboring county with essentially similar habitat. An entry in the “alert” for a particular bird remains visible for only seven days, and there appears to be no way to “recall” an entry after it has timed out.

Using, as we do, a checklist compiled in May2008, we have difficulties with changes in bird populations, Normal changes take place at what is a very slow pace, but sometimes things happen relatively quickly. The most obvious recent rapid change affecting the local area has been the spread of Limpkins from Florida. We have accommodated this change using our best judgement, as we feel birders want to know where the species can be found. Initially in a range change, it is easy to simply include sightings of the spreading species. But after a few years, we will have to cease including them. We do not know what the various county reviewers are doing!

Local Counties

Rufous Hummingbird	Aug 31	JEF-Nederland (1) JAW
Tropical Kingbird	Aug 24	JEF-Island Operating Heliport area (1) Kevin Sitton
Scarlet Tanager	Aug 23	NEW-Rd 692 Toledo Bend (1) Bob Fredericks

Nearby Counties

Snow Goose	Aug 2-30	HAS-Bliss Meadows Park (1) mult obs
Ross's Goose	Jul 31	HAS-Copper Lakes Park (1) Terry Woodward
Limpkin	Aug 5	GAL-Magnolia Ridge Retention Basin (1) Georgie Eschenbach
Pomarine Jaeger	Aug 23	GAL-30Mi SE of Galveston (1) Galveston Pelagic
Masked Booby	Aug 24	GAL-60 Mi SSE of Galveston Galveston Pelagic
White-tailed Hawk	Aug 11	CAL-Tom Segall rd (1) Charlotte Chechotsky
	Aug 12	CAL-Friesen Rd (1) Claire H, Tom H
	Aug 16	CAL-Ward Line Rd S end (1) J G Miller

Broad-winged Hawk	Aug 13	CAM-Oak Grove/Rutherford Oaks (1) Van Remsen, Ezra Garber
Burrowing Owl	Aug 6-29-	GAL-Wharf Rd/20th St (1) Eowyn Johnson, Greg Whitaker, Jamie Schubert
	Aug 14-31	GAL-Harborside Dr (1) mult obs
Peregrine Falcon	Aug 19	HAS-N Terminal Rd (1) Miles Scheuering, Nolan Clements, Samantha Webb
Cattle Tyrant	Aug 4, 22	GAL-E Beach Dr (1) Greg Whitaker
Gray Kingbird	Aug 1-24	HAS-East River 9 Golf Course (1) mult obs
Tropical Kingbird	Aug 18	GAL-Apfel Park (1),Richard Liebler
Orange-crowned Warbler	Aug 20	HAS-Baytown (1) Grant Parajuli

Abbreviations used: ANG – Angelina County; ANWR – Jocelyn Nungaray NWR (ex-Anahuac NWR); CAL – Calcasieu Parish, LA; CAM – Cameron Parish, LA; 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; LIB – Liberty County; NEW – Newton County; ORA – Orange County;; PI – Pleasure Island, Port ArthurSAA – San Augustine County.; 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.

Golden Triangle Audubon Society
P. O. Box 1292
Nederland, Texas 77627-1292

FIRST CLASS MAIL

NATIONAL AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP FORM

Membership Form

To join the National Audubon Society, please complete this form and return with Introductory Membership fee of \$20 (payable to the National Audubon Society, or indicate you wish to be billed) to National Audubon Society, Memberships, PO Box 97194, Washington, DC 20090-7194. To use this form to give a membership as a gift, please complete the form and indicate your name in the appropriate space. Payment should accompany gift memberships.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Gift from: _____

☐ Check enclosed ☐ Please bill me

Golden Triangle Audubon C5ZW250Z

Brown Pelican SUBSCRIPTION/ MEMBERSHIP FORM

Mail to Golden Triangle Audubon Society (GTAS), P. O. Box 1292, Nederland, Texas 77627-1292 or bring to any Membership Meeting. National Audubon Society (NAS) members with addresses within our official territory are automatically GTAS members without further payment, but are asked to contribute \$20 if they are able since we only receive a very small amount from NAS after the first year.

Subscriptions from NAS Members with mailing addresses outside our official territory, and others wishing to subscribe are \$20 per year (Jan-Dec).

Name: _____

Address: _____

eMail or Tel No: _____

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.