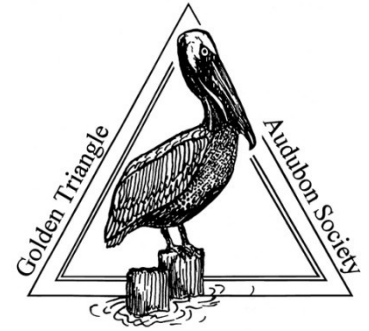


# *The Brown Pelican*



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

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Vol. 31 No 10

October 2025

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**Membership Meeting**  
**Thursday October 16, 2025 7:00 p.m.**  
**Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont**

**A Trip to India**  
**Christine Brouwer**

Last year, Christine Brouwer gave a great presentation on the birds of her home country, the Netherlands. This year, she embarked on a new adventure: a trip to India for her daughter's wedding. As a dedicated bird enthusiast, Christine knew her camera had to come along to capture the country's diverse avian life.

While the wedding festivities took place over several days, Christine made time to explore some of India's most renowned natural areas. Her journey included visits to Gir National Park, the last sanctuary of the Asian Lion, and Ranthambore National Park, a famous home for the Asian Tiger. These parks, while known for their big cats, are also treasures for birdwatchers, offering sightings of species like the Woolly-necked Stork and the Green Bee-eater. She also visited Keoladeo National Park in Bharatpur, a noted hotspot for birdwatching.

Christine will share her incredible tour of India, showing us a mix of photos from the wedding, the local culture, and of course, the many beautiful birds she encountered.

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.

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### Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Web Site for more information  
[www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://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](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org).*

**Future Programs and Field Trips. Always check the website [goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://goldentriangleaudubon.org) for possible changes.**

**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). We have never had a program covering this part of the World, nor do we see many reports elsewhere! See page 1 for details.

### 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

**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.

**Saturday October 25. Sabine Woods Work Day.** After review, we have decided to postpone the Work Day to Saturday October 25. We have contracted for the necessary "heavy" fall mowing, and will contract for more if necessary. Nevertheless, if anyone wants to help at the Woods at any time, there are always a variety of tasks suited to all levels of ability waiting to be accomplished. Please in the first instance, contact John Whittle at [gtaudubon.org](http://gtaudubon.org) or call and leave a message at 409-722-4193.

#### 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, Beaumont, Texas. At this meeting, we will hold elections for all Officer positions 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](mailto: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, and especially younger blood!. If necessary, we will be happy to arrange for you to act as an understudy to an existing volunteer for a year (or two).

**We do not meet in December.** We do yet have details of the various area Christmas Counts, but will as soon as possible post dates and details on the website at [www.GoldenTriangleAudubon.org](http://www.GoldenTriangleAudubon.org). The count period runs Dec 14th to Jan 5th

# Fall Migration Count 20 September 2025

*A fuller version of this report can be found on the Golden Triangle Audubon Website.*

The Fall Migration Count was held in weather that for most purposes would be described as excellent, but excellent weather is not necessarily the best weather for birdwatching if finding the greatest number or greatest variety of birds is the goal. We had a very respectable 19 observers in 12 parties. By count day the county was beginning to get quite dry, but there was about two inches of rain in many, but not all, parts of the county the Wednesday before (September 17). In fall, the prevailing winds tend to have a northerly component, and south winds that might cause birds to say put rather than leaving for a non-stop flight to the Yucatan are rare.

Reviewing the counts suggests that we probably could have used more observers, and could then further subdivided the sections along the shore from Sabine west to the county line just east of High Island. However, accessing most of the beach in Jefferson County is not easy. Nowadays, only the west beach within Sea Rim and a couple of miles of McFaddin Beach are easily accessed. Because there is a cut just east of Sea Rim Estates Road, the six miles east from there to Texas Point are accessible only on foot. The East Beach from just outside the headquarters area at Sea Rim SP is typically soft sand, and again can only be accessed on foot but often has more concentrations of birds than anywhere else that is more easily accessed. The west beach at Sea Rim is birder friendly. McFaddin Beach is only safely accessible by vehicle for a mile or two west from the beach entrance that is just short of where Highway 87 currently ends and Clam Lake Road turns into McFaddin NWR. The remainder of the beach to the county line is only accessible on foot or by the brave with a suitable vehicle on account of soft sand and soft mud. Our coverage of McFaddin NWR/Clam Lake Road was essentially non-existent this year.

Looking at the overall picture, the observers found about 12,401 birds of 154 species. All figures are tentative pending review of the spreadsheet by the observers. The 10-year average is 11,500 birds of 157 species. If there is any group of species that we were short of it would probably be the shorebirds, both beach birds and wading birds. Next year, we will try to augment our activity on the beach and marshy areas, although a large part of the problem this year was likely a high tide that caused the beach birds to find somewhere to hide out of sight. We also would probably benefit by being able to spend more observer hours in the wooded areas

We have conducted a fall count each year since 1996, with one exception when the results of a hurricane made conducting a count impractical. We have always been cognizant of the fact that the date we have always used – the third Saturday in September – catches the early part of fall migration, with many migrants that are going to spend the winter along the Upper Texas Coast and nearby still some time and distance away from reaching their wintering habitat, along with many migrants that are going to fly across the Gulf. The dates of fall migration by the birds are much more variable than in the spring when the genetically programmed urge to proceed to the breeding grounds and to be the first to get there to grab the prime territories is the predominant controlling urge. We believe that fall migration is heavily influenced by the availability of food.

If there are plentiful supplies of food – which is typically fruits and seeds or insects – the birds are seemingly hesitant to push on south. The insectivores do eventually have to proceed south as colder weather kills the insects, but the timing of that is quite variable.

There is a push to recognize the second Saturday in October as the fall World Migratory Bird Day. The current third Saturday in September is not universally recognized. We do have 30 years of records -- actually 29 as there was no count in 2008 owing to Hurricane Ike. In other hurricane years, the count was completed before the hurricane arrived. We are reluctant to discontinue this current series, as it does capture the early part of fall migration. The second Saturday in October would capture the later migrants and the arrival of migrant species that intend to winter on the Upper Texas Coast. We are reluctant to discontinue the current long series of third Saturday in September counts. Quite obviously, one solution would be to run a count on the second Saturday in October in addition to the existing count date. However, an adequate count involves a minimum of about 12 groups counting for most of the day. We are not sure we have enough members and others willing and able to commit to two fall Saturdays. Comments welcome!

Taking the bird groups in the currently accepted (!) taxonomic order, the first to consider are ducks. The Black-bellied Whistling-Duck numbers were normal; on the other hand, finding only one Fulvous Whistling-Duck was an unusually low number. The number of Blue-winged Teal, a species that is almost always well represented in September was unusually low. The complete absence of Northern Shovelers was unusual, and Gadwall numbers were low. Mottled Duck has always been a species of concern and the number found on this count was disappointingly low

It was nice to find a covey of Northern Bobwhite in the northwest part of the county. The species is not always easy to see, and is usually heard rather than seen. The species is almost certainly resident in many areas of the county with suitable habitat. We just don't seem to see or hear them often. Ten Pied-billed Grebes was more than we usually find.

For the first year in a while, the numbers of the various species in the Dove family were unremarkable. The number of Inca Dove was up after a few years of low numbers.

The count this year hit the peak of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. The 206 reported was the highest in more than ten years.

Cattail Marsh has a lot of Water Hyacinth. That restricts its appeal to some species, but not the Gallinules; both Common and Purple like it, and there were many of both. Black-necked Stilt numbers were surprisingly low, perhaps concentrated in the relatively few areas of deeper water that are not readily accessed.

American Avocets are very gregarious, and most of them have already reached the area on their southbound migration by count day. However, we don't find them every year, but one flock was along the coast the coast this year.

Most plovers (and, for that matter, most beach birds) tend to come south early, many by August. This year's numbers were

low. Wilson's Plovers are summer birds as far as we are concerned. But we found one that had not yet departed for points south. Up until about ten years ago, the place to find Snowy Plovers was the Jefferson County coast, especially Sea Rim and nearby, but from the 20 or 30 then, we only found one this year.

Long-billed Curlew are almost certainly present along the shore throughout the year, although the checklists report reduced numbers from mid-April to as early as late July. We think most of them prefer the undisturbed beach on Texas Point NWR that we cannot easily survey.

In looking at the low and low-medium sized shorebirds, mostly beach birds, one stand-out species was the Ruddy Turnstone. Usually considered a common species, we do not find many on the fall counts, a result for which we have no explanation. Among the other "peeps," the slang term for the smaller beach sandpipers, the numbers were somewhat low, perhaps reflecting the paucity of the moist sand conditions that most of them prefer. The relatively low number of Western Sandpipers was strange. The apparent absence of accessible areas of shallow water must be the explanation of the very low numbers of dowitchers of either persuasion. Normally, we find some Short-billed close to the waterline, and lots of Long billed in any 2 to 4 inch deep areas of standing more or less fresh water, as long as the water has not been standing too long. An examination of recent year results shows this year's almost absence is not unprecedented, although the best UTC checklists show the species to be abundant from the beginning of August. We have no explanation for the absence in Jefferson County. A low number of Spotted Sandpipers, two, probably reflects the inaccessibility of the North Levee of Pleasure Island.

Laughing Gull numbers were slightly low. Ring-billed Gulls are normally present in number by the second and third weeks of September. eBird does not easily produce granular details, especially within a specific month, but there is a hint that in September this year, the concentrations of the species remained much further north than usual. So perhaps our not finding any this year in Jefferson County in mid-September was not out of line. One Lesser Black-backed Gull was found. There is little doubt that the species is fairly slowly becoming part of the Upper Texas coast avifauna. Gull-billed Terns are reported more often in the summer - April through the third week in September, - but are present year-round. The UTC checklist we use has an odd indication of 'rare' for the third week of September while every other week in the year is shown as uncommon or common. The one we found this year falls into that odd gap which we think must be a quirk in the records. We have found the species in more than half of recent fall Migration counts.

Forster's Tern numbers were much lower than usual this year. No Caspian Terns were seen on count day, marking the first year in more than ten. However, the species is quite often found a short distance inland from the shoreline, and our lack of coverage on Clam Lake Road may have been partly to blame. Royal Terns rarely stray very far from the beaches, and this year, there were a normal number. Twenty-two Black Skimmers was the best since 2016.

Six Anhinga was lowish. We found a "low normal" number of Neotropic Cormorants. Brown Pelican numbers were also

significantly low.

By count day, most Least Bitterns have usually left for parts south, so finding three was noteworthy. Only 14 Great Blue Herons was very low. They were, as is normal, spread widely across the county. Did they just not have a good breeding year? Great Egrets, which we think of as preferring similar habitat to Great Blues, were reported in normal numbers. Over most of the last few years, the number of Snowy Egrets exploded, but this year's numbers were more modest. In fact, the number (84) was the lowest in more than ten years. Perhaps the same factors led to the small number of Tricolored Herons, although Little Blue Heron numbers were "high normal." The number of what we have to get used to calling "Western Cattle Egrets" was very high, about double the numbers of recent years. The behavior of the flocks seemed to us to indicate that they were migrating. Green Heron numbers were very much normal. The numbers of both Night-Heron species were a little low. White Ibis were normal, while dark Ibis (mostly White-faced Ibis) were a little low.

The number of Black Vultures was exceptionally high, while the number of Turkey Vultures was relatively low but not unprecedented. Osprey numbers seem to have slowly increased over the last ten years or so, but this year's eight did not match last year's 16. No white-tailed Kites were seen; as their range seems to have contracted somewhat. The Jefferson County population seems to increase and decrease with no obvious causation. Looking at eBird, there is an isolated population along the Upper Texas Coast centered on Galveston but not extending very far east or west. Unlike their White-tailed cousins, Mississippi Kites are migratory and the third week of September is getting towards the tail end of their migration, but we did find nine.

Northern Harriers are just arriving by the third week of September but we usually find a few as we did this year. Four Cooper's Hawks was about normal, but no Sharp-shinned were found. By count day, the Cattail Marsh Bald Eagles are usually preparing to nest. One was seen there this year. The Broad-winged Hawk migration over Smith Point typically peaks around September 25, five days after count day this year and the seven seen on the count was about normal. Swainson's Hawks seem to be established as summer residents (and presumably breeders) in small numbers, so four is now normal. The first wintering Red-tailed Hawks arrive in time for the count, and finding four was about average.

Two Great Horned Owl were about normal, but the Eastern Screech-Owl was the first since 2018. Two Barn Owls and one Barred Owl rounded out the owls, quite a good variety. The first Belted Kingfishers had arrived on schedule. Woodpeckers were normal with Red-bellied, Downy and Pileated in above average numbers.

Crested Caracaras are now firmly established in Jefferson County and 11 was about average. The first American Kestrels usually arrive early in September, and being partial to perching on wires, they are easily seen. Three was about an average number for the count, which is held relatively early in the arrival period for the species. The area checklists suggest that Merlin do not arrive for the winter until early October, but we find the species on about 80 percent of the fall counts. We recorded one this year. One Peregrine Falcon seen in south county was only

the third in the last decade.

In many ways, flycatchers are more prominent migrants in the fall than they are in the spring. A large part of that perception is due to the fact that flycatchers, especially the smaller species, pass through northbound at the end of the spring migration season, when many birders have already greatly reduced their birding trips. In the early fall, when we do our migration count, flycatchers are perhaps the most prominent group of migrants. Like essentially all migrating species, there are considerably more birds in the fall with the recently hatched birds augmenting the numbers. But most species do not encounter conditions that prompt them to pause at the coast. Many of the events that make spring migration exciting at coastal “migrant traps” -- adverse weather events such as fronts with adverse (north) winds and rain -- do not have nearly as many counterparts in the fall. But, fall birding, especially early fall birding, produces species that are not as frequently encountered in the spring. Olive-sided Flycatchers, in our area at least, seem not only to be much more numerous, but much more partial to high prominent perches in the fall. Perhaps the reason is the birds of the year have not been warned by their parents that it is much easier for a raptor to pick them off on a high open perch! The *Empidonax* flycatchers do not perch in the open much, and are a difficult group to identify to species. With the added identification issues engendered by a high percentage of immature birds, many are recorded by experienced birders in the fall as *Empidonax* species. The old adage that the first arriving Eastern Phoebe drives out the last leaving Wood-Pewee is not completely true as there is some overlap. In the fall count, as this year, there are still plenty of Eastern Wood-Pewees around -- in fact there may be more or they may just be more visible -- as they feed up in preparation for crossing the Gulf. Eastern Phoebes are quite rare before the first few days of October, but this was the third consecutive year that the fall Count has encountered this species. Eastern Kingbirds are at the beginning of their normal migration period. This year does not seem to have been a particularly good one for Eastern Kingbirds, but there were a reasonable number nevertheless. We are on the eastern edge of the breeding range, so variations in numbers are likely to be more pronounced than in the heart of the range. Populations and ranges tend to change more at the edges. The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, despite its very different appearance, is closely related genetically to the Eastern Kingbird, and we are in a narrow band where both are common. This year, the number of the Scissor-tailed Flycatchers was similar to that of the last four or five years. The reported seven Western Kingbirds this year was a large number. There is no doubt that they pass through in migration, especially in the spring, and eBird data suggests they nest not much further west than our location. But it was 2018 that we previously had a Western on the fall count itself.

We have been monitoring the local Loggerhead Shrike population closely for many years, as we watched the numbers in the open areas of the county, especially the rice growing areas in the west, decrease fairly dramatically. The historical results of the fall count show the significant decline ending in 2021 followed by a slow increase, continuing through 2025. There are probably too many variables and not enough micro-detailed information to allow statistically significant analyses, but we

believe that the decline in Loggerhead Shrike populations in the rice-growing areas of the county was coincident with an apparent shift to semi-dwarf varieties of rice from about 2000 to 2015. More recently, it appears that rice cultivation has been replaced by soybean and especially crawfish farming on much of the land. However, in other areas, for example, along Highway 87 and other roads in South County, shrike populations do not seem to have changed much. Shrikes do not consume much grain themselves, but the insects, small mammals and reptiles, and amphibians they do consume do tend to thrive in rice growing areas. The shrike numbers have recovered to 2018 numbers, but these are still about half the numbers of the early part of the century.

Among the vireos, only White-eyed Vireos are found in numbers during the period in which the count falls, and there is no apparent change in those numbers. Other migratory vireos except Red-eyed Vireos tend to migrate slightly later in September and early October. Count day does catch the last part of Red-eyed Vireo migration. If anything, the number of that species was on the low side.

The numbers of Blue Jays and American Crows were both high, especially the American Crow which was the highest in more than ten years. The species has apparently fully recovered from the effects of West Nile Virus, to which they and other Corvids were exceptionally susceptible. The “low normal” number of Fish Crows may well principally reflect the dry conditions which likely caused them to retreat into the wetter parts of the county along and near the rivers and bayous, which are often difficult to access.

Analyzing swallow numbers on a single count is difficult because they tend to migrate in relatively large but very loose flocks, and there are some challenges in identifying flying swallows that often are in mixed flocks. We do have a “swallow species” option on report forms! This year, Northern Rough-winged Swallow numbers were very high, but largely because of one flock. Cliff and Cave Swallows are difficult to separate in flight but numbers were also high. Because of the difficulty, we cannot be sure, but we believe that either Cave Swallow numbers are increasing, or that the range is expanding eastwards or maybe both. Bank Swallow numbers may be increasing, but we find them mostly in mixed flocks with Tree Swallows, making accurate determination of the numbers difficult. Bank Swallows in Europe (where they are called Sand Martins) are currently regarded as conspecific with those in North America. We do not know if any research has been carried out but it would not surprise us if someone proposed a split, as it seems unlikely there is any interchange between the populations. Northern Rough-winged Swallows are easier to separate from Tree Swallows and help the process by being much more likely to forage low to the ground. The number of Rough-wingeds seen on the count this year was very high relative to numbers in the last decade, and we may be seeing a significant increase in the populations.

Tufted Titmice are very reluctant to come further south than the northern part of the county, but numbers there this year were very much higher than in the recent preceding years. It remains to be seen whether this is indicative of a trend of expanding range, or an increase in overall population, or simply a minor shift in a relatively dry year.

It will take a few more years to be sure, but, although the numbers are small, we are finding Red-breasted Nuthatches on more counts than we used to. It seems we have an increasing frequency of one or two birds of that species spending the entire winter at Sabine Woods.

The House Wren was early, but one was also found last year. Likewise, the two Marsh Wrens were also distinctly early. Carolina Wren numbers were about double normal. Twenty-three Blue-gray Gnatcatchers was actually a little low.

Eastern Bluebirds can be regarded as a resident species, although numbers or at least the visibility of the species increases in the three months that comprise what winter there is in Southeast Texas. The 38 recorded on the count this year was the highest in more than a decade, and it begins to look as if the populations may be increasing at a modest pace. We know from what we see in our bird bath in Nederland that American Robins are present throughout the year and almost certainly breed somewhere there. They are not particularly visible, and our observers do not spend large chunks of time in residential areas. That may well be where the robins are, so finding a very limited number on the count probably should not be surprising. We will probably look to recruit some feeder watchers for future counts! Likewise, Gray Catbirds probably are present in many residential area. The one recorded this year was in Bevil Oaks. A similar situation prevails with Brown Thrashers, although they may prefer a somewhat "wilder" areas with trees etc. The one this year was in a relatively undeveloped area in the "mid-north" part of the county. In the county, Northern Mockingbirds usually are closely associated with human habitation in areas where most houses have yards. They seem to tolerate and maybe even prefer human presence and activity, so the numbers are quite high. The 2025 count was the highest in more than ten years. The number of European Starlings was within the normal range. House Finches are also usually associated with human habitation areas, but numbers in Jefferson County are quite low. Four were seen this year.

A September count is too early for any of the migratory sparrows. The only sparrow we usually find on this count is the resident Seaside Sparrow in the marshy areas around the Sabine Pass area. The 17 this year was "low normal."

As we have noted in the past, the number of Eastern Meadowlarks that are found on the fall count is typically very low, five this year. The eBird maps do not show much change in distribution during the year. Why then do we see so few in September? (Unlike the Eastern, the Western Meadowlark does retreat from the cold parts in winter and a good number of them can be found in the Texas Panhandle and in West Texas in that season.) The only explanation we can think of is that the Eastern Meadowlarks, which do not appear to move even a short distance, "hide" during their molt, which takes place from August to October after breeding. The process is a complete molt of all feathers, and is said to take several weeks. The mid-point would then be when we are conducting the fall count. Presumably, they are not easily flushed during that period, and so are rarely detected on the count.

Only rarely do we find any Orchard Orioles so the one at Sabine Woods on the count was noteworthy. Their southbound migration begins in late July, and it is rare for any to be still in

Southeast Texas by count day. This is quite remarkable as they winter in southern Mexico and northern Central America, not very far away as bird migration goes. Baltimore Orioles migrate a little later than Orchard Orioles and we consistently find a reasonable but small number on the fall count, as this year when we found seven, six of them at Sabine Woods. They do not go much further south than the Orchard Orioles in winter.

Both Red-winged Blackbirds and Brown-headed Cowbirds are found in medium to large flocks. The 56 Red-wings was perhaps a little low, while the total of 369 cowbirds was "high normal." The 2169 Common Grackles was uncommonly high. Most of them were in the western part of the county. The numbers of the larger grackles, the Boat-tailed and Great-tailed were well within the norms for this count.

The first question that most birders ask in reviewing the results of counts like this one is "how many warbler species were found?" The simple answer for the fall 2025 count is 13, mostly in ones and two, but, of course, here we need to discuss some of the details. Perhaps the most noteworthy was a Yellow-throated Warbler. Two were seen, one in Bevil Oaks and one in Sabine Woods. This species winters mainly in Florida, the Yucatan, the Bahamas and Cuba, but also in very small numbers along the US Gulf Coast. It is regarded as common in the second half of March, then as uncommon in the local area until October after which it is rare. Excluding the year-round Pine Warbler and Common Yellowthroat, there are perhaps two other warbler species that are often looked for in the early part of fall migration, the Canada Warbler – a late migrant in the spring and an early migrant in the fall – and the Mourning Warbler which is very shy in the spring, but the young birds at least are much easier seen in the fall. One of each was seen in Sabine Woods. Other warblers seen were Black-and-white Warbler, Nashville Warbler (much more common at Sabine Woods in the fall as opposed to the spring - the species is a circum-Gulf migrant and seems to continue due north in the spring), Hooded Warbler, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Yellow Warblers, all species we expect in the fall.

One slightly lingering Summer Tanager was normal. Blue Grosbeaks are fairly common in the fall, and 15 was "low normal." Indigo Buntings numbers are quite variable, and four was a little low. However, the peak of the fall migration for the species is in October.

And finally, still going strong after its introduction into the US in New York City in Brooklyn in 1851 is the House Sparrow. This year's 79 in the county on the 2025 count was the highest since 2015. The way things are going in their native England, we may have to return some of them. They have been placed on the Red List (highest conservation priority) there! The reasons given include a lack of suitable nesting sites in modern buildings and a lack of caterpillars to feed their young. They always breed in close proximity to humans. We could return them in approximately nine hours in comfort much less stressfully than 14 days in a then modern steamship their ancestors had to endure!

Species recorded:

WHISTLING-DUCK, Black-bellied (215); WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous (1); TEAL, Blue-winged (77); DUCK, Mottled (7);

BOBWHITE, Northern (5); GREBE, Pied-billed (10); PIGEON, Rock (285); COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian (14); DOVE, Inca (9); DOVE, White-winged (125); DOVE, Mourning (342); CUCKOO, Yellow-billed (1); SWIFT, Chimney (15); HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-throated (205); HUMMINGBIRD species (1); RAIL, King (6); RAIL, Clapper (23); RAIL, King/Clapper (1); SORA (1); GALLINULE, Common (109); GALLINULE, Purple (24); STILT, Black-necked (32); AVOCET, American (9); PLOVER, Black-bellied (5); KILLDEER (90); PLOVER, Semipalmated (1); PLOVER, Piping (7); PLOVER, Wilson's (1); PLOVER, Snowy (1); CURLEW, Long-billed (2); TURNSTONE, Ruddy (6); SANDERLING (43); SANDPIPER, Least (10); SANDPIPER, Western (4); DOWITCHER, Species (6); SANDPIPER, Spotted (3); YELLOWLEGS, Greater (5); WILLET (17); YELLOWLEGS, Lesser (1); GULL, Laughing (599); GULL, Lesser Black-backed (1); TERN, Gull-billed (1); TERN, Black (5); TERN, Common (8); TERN, Forster's (13); TERN, Royal (160); SKIMMER, Black (22); ANHINGA (6); CORMORANT, Neotropic (166); PELICAN, Brown (30); BITTERN, Least (3); HERON, Great Blue (14); EGRET, Great (156); EGRET, Snowy (84); HERON, Little Blue (45); HERON, Tricolored (20); EGRET, Reddish (8); EGRET, Western Cattle (3317); HERON, Green (21); NIGHT-HERON, Black-crowned (5); NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crowned (4); IBIS, White (354); IBIS, White-faced (58); IBIS, *Plegadis* (64); SPOONBILL, Roseate (31); VULTURE, Black (146); VULTURE, Turkey (89); OSPREY (8); KITE, Mississippi (3); HARRIER, Northern (2); HAWK, Cooper's (4); EAGLE, Bald (1); HAWK, Red-shouldered (12); HAWK, Broad-winged (7); HAWK, Swainson's (4); HAWK, Red-tailed (4); HAWK species (1); OWL, Barn (2); SCREECH-OWL, Eastern (1); OWL, Great Horned (2); OWL, Barred (1); KINGFISHER, Belted (6); WOODPECKER, Red-headed (3); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (30); WOODPECKER, Downy (26); WOODPECKER, Pileated (12); CARACARA, Crested (11); KESTREL, American (3); MERLIN (1); FALCON, Peregrine (1); FLYCATCHER, Olive-sided (2); WOOD-PEWEE, Eastern (2); FLYCATCHER, Empidonax (3); PHOEBE, Eastern (3); FLYCATCHER, Vermilion (1); FLYCATCHER, Great Crested (2); KINGBIRD, Western (7); KINGBIRD, Eastern (17); FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tailed (28); SHRIKE, Loggerhead (41); VIREO, White-eyed (26); VIREO, Yellow-throated (1); VIREO, Red-eyed (3); JAY, Blue (174); CROW, American (78); CROW, Fish (6); CROW, Species (2); SWALLOW, Bank (1); SWALLOW, Tree (83); SWALLOW, N Rough-winged (31); SWALLOW, Barn (49); SWALLOW, Cave (23); SWALLOW, Cliff/Cave (220); SWALLOW species (53); CHICKADEE, Carolina (24); TITMOUSE, Tufted (15); NUTHATCH, Red-breasted (1); WREN, House (1); WREN, Marsh (2); WREN, Carolina (49); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (23); BLUEBIRD, Eastern (38); ROBIN, American (1); CATBIRD, Gray (1); THRASHER, Brown (1); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (220); STARLING, European (566); FINCH, House (4); SPARROW, Seaside (17); CHAT, Yellow-breasted (2); MEADOWLARK, Eastern (5); ORIOLE, Orchard (1); ORIOLE, Baltimore (7); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (56); COWBIRD, Brown-headed (369); GRACKLE, Common (2169); GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (126); GRACKLE, Great-tailed (208); GRACKLE, Great-tailed/Boat-tailed (11); BLACKBIRD species (106); WATERTHRUSH, Northern (1); WARBLER, Black-and-white (2); WARBLER, Nashville (1); WARBLER, Mourning (1); YELLOWTHROAT, Common (7); WARBLER, Hooded (1); REDSTART, American (2); PARULA, Northern (1); WARBLER, Yellow (3); WARBLER, Pine (4); WARBLER, Yellow-throated (2); WARBLER, Black-throated Green (1); WARBLER, Canada (1); TANAGER, Summer (1); CARDINAL, Northern (108); GROSBEAK, Blue (15); BUNTING, Indigo (4); SPARROW, House (73).

TOTAL NUMBER of BIRDS (12401); Number of species (154);

Number of Observers (19); Number of Parties (15); Party hours on foot (11); Miles on foot (6.30); Miles by automobile (382); Party Hours Total (49); Miles Total (379); Party-hours stationary/feeder watching (1)

Participants: Sue Benson, Linda and Howard Davis, Sherry Gibson, Claudia Gilson, John Haynes, Thomas Hellweg, Johnny Johnson, Denise and Gary Kelley, Steve Mayes, Sherrie Roden, Christine Sliva, Harlan Stewart, Liz Timmons and friend, Jana and John Whittle.

*John A. Whittle.*

## Field Trip to Smith Point Hawk Watch – 27 September 2025

*The Smith Point Hawk Watch was originated as an all-volunteer, part-time effort in 1992. In 1997, the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory in partnership with Hawk Watch International and the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department instituted a full-time, 3 month annual census of the raptors migrating through Smith Point each fall. In 2011 we expanded the count to 3.5 months to capture the early Swallow-tailed Kite migration.*

*From August 15 through November 30, the Hawk Watch is held daily at the Candy Abshier Wildlife Management Area where GCBO has a 30 foot observation tower. The hawk watch is staffed daily from 8:00 am to 4:00 PM CDT. You are invited to come out any day during the season.*

There are many ways to measure success for a birding field trip. Maybe seeing huge numbers of birds or seeing a large number of different species is the measuring stick. Perhaps seeing one really rare bird is enough to make a trip successful. Or what if there are just constantly some nice birds to look at and everyone just has a nice day? That's a good field trip too and that was the experience of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society on the annual field trip to the Smith Point Hawk Watch.

The day started out pretty typically for Smith Point in the fall. A few Accipiters darting around early and lots of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds at the feeders on the tower. Other migrants could be seen moving through the trees and brush around the tower with Blue-gray Gnatcatchers being the most numerous. A couple of Wilson's Warblers were also located along with Blue Grosbeak, Yellow Warbler and calling Indigo Buntings. An Empidonax Flycatcher or two played hide and seek with the group while a distant Scissor-tailed Flycatcher perched on a wire.

On the bay side, a different group of birds were on display. Brown Pelicans were easily seen plunge diving for prey while a Spotted Sandpiper worked the rocks near shore. An American Oystercatcher flew by low while a lone Magnificent Frigatebird soared high. White Ibis were a constant as they flew by in small flocks.

But hawks are the main focus here and there were plenty to look at! The recent frontal passage did not produce the thousands of birds that can sometimes result from such weather but the birders had no shortage of hawks to look at. Mississippi Kites were the first to start soaring which is normal. These were almost exclusively immature birds and they soared around in broad circles as they debated the best way off of Smith Point. A few dined on some of the many dragonflies filling the skies around the tower. At least four Ospreys flew around the tower and were seen on and off throughout the field trip. One, likely a young bird, constantly vocalized. Perhaps it was still trying to beg an adult for a free meal! Broad-winged Hawks are always the common bird and there is no better

place to study this species than Smith Point. Immature and adult birds were seen in some numbers and the differences between the ages could be easily seen. Unfortunately, no dark morph birds were present on this day but plenty of light morph Broad-wings represented the species well. Throw in a few Northern Harriers, Red-tailed Hawks, American Kestrels, Crested Caracaras, Sharp-shinned Hawks and Cooper's Hawks and you have a pretty well-rounded day for raptors!

It may not have been a huge number of birds but when the hawks are constantly soaring overhead the birders always have something to enjoy! A trip to the Smith Point hawk watch is about seeing hawks, so this was a very successful for the Golden Triangle birders! No doubt most will be back next year to do it all again!

The following species were recorded at from on or around the tower at Smith Point:

Mourning Dove (5); Ruby-throated Hummingbird (30); American Oystercatcher (1); Spotted Sandpiper (1); Willet (1); Greater Yellowlegs (1); Laughing Gull (12); Royal Tern (2); Anhinga (10); White Ibis (125); Brown Pelican (10); Neotropic Cormorant (5); Magnificent Frigatebird (1); Great Egret (1); Snowy Egret (2); Little Blue Heron (1); Western Cattle Egret (6); Black Vulture (2); Turkey Vulture (5); Osprey (4); Sharp-shinned Hawk (12); Cooper's Hawk (2); Northern Harrier (2); Mississippi Kite (15); Broad-winged Hawk (60); Red-shouldered Hawk (2); Swainson's Hawk (1); Red-tailed Hawk (2); Belted Kingfisher (1); Crested Caracara (1); American Kestrel (2); Alder Flycatcher (1); Least Flycatcher (3); Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (1); Blue Jay (8); Carolina Chickadee (1); Northern Rough-winged Swallow (15); Barn Swallow (5); Cliff Swallow (1); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (15); Gray Catbird (1); Brown Thrasher (1); Northern Mockingbird (1); Yellow Warbler (1); Common Yellowthroat (1); Wilson's Warbler (2); Northern Cardinal (2); Blue Grosbeak (2); Indigo Bunting (2)

*Steve Mayes*



# Bird Sightings –September 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 month's highlights include a number of Groove-billed Anis in Galveston and Harris Counties, and one in Calcasieu Parish in Louisiana.

The current policy of only including migrants if they are two weeks or more outside the normal date range seems to be working, and allowing the column to report mostly species that are well out of range or date. Both the Groove-billed Ani and the Red-breasted Nuthatch have the potential to perhaps be in the process of becoming less rare, as both species have visited the area several times. The Yellow-headed Caracara is clearly a long staying vagrant and perhaps not likely to become a normal part of the local avifauna. We will be interested to see if the Ringed Kingfisher turns out to be a one-off event of a species that is resident not very far south of the local area.

## Local Counties

Whimbrel	Sep 19-20	JEF-Sea Rim SP(1) Ryan Pierce, SM
Lsr Black-backed Gul	Sep 19-20	JEF-Sea Rim SP(1) Ryan Pierce, SM
Cape May Warbler	Sep 27	JEF-SW (1) Debbie McMullen, Erik Wolf, Brian Doffing

## Nearby Counties

Snow Goose	Sep 4-20	HAS-Bliss Meadows Park (1) mult obs
American Flamingo	Sep 12	GAL-8 mile Beach (1) Andrea Gerig, Anette Carlisle
Broad-bill Hummingbird	Sep 26-27	CAL-southeast Lake Charles(1) Mult obs
Allen's Hummingbird	Sep 1	HAS-Bridgeland Creek Parkway (1) Dania Sanchez
Groove-billed Ani	Sep 24	HAS-Copperfield area (1) Howard
	Sep 24	GAL-Stewart Rd (1) Kyle O'Haver
		GAL-Sandhill Crane Soccer Complex (1) mult obs
	Sep 25-28	GAL-Campeche Cove (1) mult obs
Limpkin	Sep 28	CAL-Tom Stegal Rd (1) David Booth, Kathy Rhodeas, Charlotte Chehotsky
	Sep 28	GAL-Galveston Is SP (1) Sherry Gory-
	Sep 30	HAS-Memorial Park (1) Jim Highberger
	Sep 19	GAL-Magnolia Ridge Retention Basin (1) Jamie Schubert
Yellow-belli Sapsucker	Sep 27	HAS Explortion Green Phase 1 (1) Olivia Lee
Sooty Tern	Sep 1	GAL-Bolivar Flats (1) Todd White
Burrowing Owl	Sep 1-	GAL-Wharf Rd/20th St (1) Jeff Sexton
Ringed Kingfisher	Sep 1-30	GAL-Harborside Dr (1) continuing mult obs
	Sep 28	GAL-8-mi rd/Sportsman's rd (1) Matthew Papula, Jeremy Cordock
Yellow-headed Caracara	Sep 25	GAL-8-mi Rd/Sportsman Road(1) Sherman Witte
Alder Flycatcher	Sep 20	CAL-Lake Charles (1) James Smithers
	Sep 21	GAL-Lafitte's Cove (1) Tim and Jan Almond

	Sep 29	GAL-HI Smith Oaks (1) John Berner, Michael Kalisek
Great Kiskadee	Sep 3	CHA-Wallisville Project (1) Tony Frank
Western Kingbird	Sep 10	GAL-Bill Gayle Rd (1) David Booth
Red-breasted Nuthatch	Sep 25	HAS-Robindell (1) Elle Bow
	Sep 26	GAL-HI nr Eubanks (1) Brian Anderson
	Sep 26	CHA-Smith Pt Hawk Watch (1) Joseph Kennedy
	Sep 26	GAL-HI Eubanks (1) Brian Anderson
Bewick's Wren	Sep 9	LIB-Cleveland CR2229 (1) Dannel McDougald
Lincoln's Sparrow	Sep 28	CAL-Corbina Rd (1) James Smithers
Bobolink	Sep 20	GAL-Lafitte's Cove (1) Cin-Ty Lee, Leo Costello
Bullock's Oriole	Sep 20-22	HAS-Eldridge area (1) mult obs
	Sep 29	GAL-HI Eubanks Woods (1)
Cape May Warbler	Sep 25	HI Snith Oaks (1) WE
Cerulean Warbler	Sep 26	CAM-Willow Island (1) Michael Musumeche, Cheryl Huner
Bay-breasted Warbler	Sep 28	GAL-Corps Woods (21)Judith Rowen
	Sep 29	CAL-Lake Charles Drew Park (1) David Booth
Palm Warbler	Sep 21	CAL-Lake Charles (1) J G Miller
Prairie Warbler	Sep 3	GAL-Jamaica Beach, Indian Beach (1) Chris McMullin
	Sep 13	GAL-Dos Vacas Muertas (1) Mike Austin
Black-thr. Gray Warbler	Sep 25	GAL-HI Smith Oaks (1) Paul Sivon
Western Tanager	Sep 26	GAL-HI Eubanks (1) Brian Anderson
	Sep 30	GAL-Edith Moore Sanctuary (1) WE

**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  
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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.