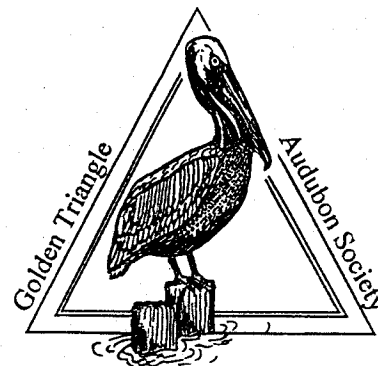


Brown Pelican

Scanned from Originals

The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 6 No. 1

January 2000

Membership Meeting

Thursday, January 20, 2000
6:30 PM, Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont

The Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail
Upper Texas Coast Section

David Baker
Big Thicket National Preserve

The recent completion of the Upper Texas Coast Section of the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail has heightened interest in birding and ecotourism in the area. David Baker will talk about some of the efforts being made to promote the trail in South-east Texas, with special reference to the Big Thicket loop, which stretches from Interstate 10 up to Lakes Sam Rayburn and Toledo Bend.

As usual, the doors will be open no later than 6:30 p.m., and the proceedings will start at 7:15 p.m. approximately.

Conservation -- Priorities for the Twenty-first Century

The Audubon mission is aptly summarized as the creation of a culture of conservation and the preservation of the earth's biological diversity through protection of birds and habitat.

On a global scale, one overriding problem transcends all others -- the pressures arising from the earth's ever increasing population. As the body of knowledge has increased, mankind has developed and used the capacity to render enormous physical changes to the land surface of the earth. The oceans have not escaped as the ability to harvest the bounty of the sea has reached unsustainable levels. Sustainability -- not taking or using at a rate greater than the rate of replacement -- must be the watchword for all activities which use all forms of natural resources. In some instances, commercial fishing for example, the time scale is short, two or three years at most. In others, forestry for example, the time scale is measured in tens of years. In still others, use of minerals, oil and gas, for example, the time scale is measured in thousands of years.

Two issues of truly global impact involve the effects of changing concentrations of carbon dioxide and ozone in the atmosphere. There is no doubt that carbon dioxide levels have increased steadily since the industrial revolution began. There is less agreement about both the cause and the prognosis. It is hard to escape the conclusion that the burning of fossil fuels -- wood, coal and oil -- has

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The Brown Pelican

Vol. 6, No. 1 Jan. 2000

Golden Triangle
Audubon Society

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Calendar of Events

If you can present a program of interest to a Membership Meeting, or know of some person who can, please contact Jana Whittle at (409) 722-4193.

For more information on field trips, please contact Steve Mayes, (409) 722-5807 or the trip leader.

January 22 -- Field Trip.
Cattail Marsh in Tyrrell Park. Meet at the gate at 8:00 a.m. Leader Steve Mayes.

February 3 through 6 -- Home and Garden Show.

Please volunteer to help set up and man our booth at this show to be held February 4 through 6 at the Beaumont Civil Center.

February 17 -- Membership Meeting.
Speaker and topic not yet confirmed.

February 19 - Field Trip.
Nature Conservancy's Sandyland Sanctuary, looking for the wintering birds of Southeast Texas. Brown-headed Nuthatches are quite common in the area, and we should find woodpeckers and a few sparrows in the open areas. Meet at the Sanctuary parking lot at 7:30 a.m. After rains, the low lying parts of the sanctuary and the floodplain trail may be wet or even under water. Rubber boots recommended in those circumstances. The Sanctuary is on Highway 327, which runs from Highway 69/287 just south of Kountze over to Business Highway 96 in Silsbee. From the south, it is probably easiest to take Highway 69/287 and turn right (east) on Highway 327. The entrance to the parking lot is on the north side of the road, immediately after the highway dips down to cross Village Creek. (Most of the sanctuary is on a bluff on the east side of the creek.)

March 16 -- Membership Meeting.
Tentatively, P. D. Hulce will be the speaker. "P.D." is the immediate past president of Houston Audubon and an avid participant in and compiler of Christmas Bird Counts.

March 18 -- Field Trip.
Following tradition, we will seek early migrating shorebirds at Bolivar

Flats, meeting at the vehicle barrier at 8:30 a.m., or join the group out on the flats shortly after. The Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary is accessed from Highway 87 about three miles east of the Ferry landing on the Bolivar. Turn south from Highway 87 along Rettilon Road (opposite the eastern intersection of Loop 108 with Highway 87. If sand conditions permit, drive onto the beach, turn right (west), and drive approximately one half-mile to the vehicle barrier.

Sabine Woods

The TOS Sanctuary Committee under its new chair, Dr. Brent Ortego, has adopted a more enlightened policy towards maintenance activities. Provided that there are not substantial numbers of birders or migrants in the woods, we may perform "low impact" maintenance during the previously "closed" March 15 through May 31 period, although we will not bushhog trails or work inside the main woods during that period. Authorization has been given to continue trail maintenance, to continue tallow control activities, and to commence rose control. Because almost all the tallows remaining are well away from the main woods, we will try to treat them this spring while they are in the growing phase. We will probably commence rose control activities, which will produce temporarily unsightly areas, no earlier than May 10.

We have tentatively scheduled a major work day for March 11, but the opportunity exists for volunteers to work on tallow and vine control projects, and other "outside the woods" projects at any time during the spring, but probably best not on weekends or during the second half of April. Let us know if you can help!

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. Volunteers are needed for all meetings in 2000. **We still have no volunteers for January. Please contact Jana Whittle, 722-4193, with your offer to help.**

Conservation -- Priorities for the Twenty-first Century

(continued from front page)

been a major contributor to that increase. However, the fossil fuel resources on the earth are surely finite, even if more extensive than even the most optimistic projections of only a few years ago. Eventually, mankind will be forced to use energy sources which are essentially non-consumptive as far as the earth is concerned -- solar, wind, tide and, yes, even nuclear energy in some form. The net production of carbon dioxide from energy production will then all but cease. In the meantime, the projections are that the increase in carbon dioxide levels will reduce the radiative loss of reflected solar energy -- the "greenhouse" effect -- resulting in an increase in the average temperature at and near the surface of the earth. But there are many factors not subject to easy evaluation and projection. The oceans slowly -- very slowly -- absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and convert it to bicarbonates and carbonates, some of which are deposited. In all probability an increase in the carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere will lead to increased levels of photosynthesis. (Fortunately, much more photosynthesis is effected by small marine organisms than by green plants and trees.) Photosynthesis uses solar energy to convert carbon dioxide and water to carbohydrates and oxygen, thus counterbalancing the natural activities of all non-photosynthetic organisms and the consumptions of fossil fuel, all of which involve the consumption of oxygen and the production of carbon dioxide (and energy).

The other global factor involves the ozone concentrations in the upper atmosphere. Ozone is formed in relatively small quantities in the upper atmosphere by a series of complex gas-phase chemical reactions. In the upper levels, ozone serves to filter out the high energy ultraviolet component of solar radiation. (At lower levels, ozone is a particularly irritating air pollutant.) The chlorofluorocarbons ("CFCs"), although excellent fluids for refrigeration processes, are chemically very stable and eventually make their way to the upper atmosphere where they prevent the normal formation of ozone. Ozone levels in the upper atmosphere have declined since the mid-eighties, when reliable measurements first became available, and quite probably since the seventies. But unlike the situation with surface air, small bubbles of which become trapped in the polar ice caps as they form, enabling a historical record to be constructed from ice cores drilled in the ice caps, there is no historical record of the composition of the upper atmosphere. We simply do not know if there have historically been small or large variations in stratospheric ozone levels.

The upper level ozone problem is being addressed, essentially world-wide, by changing to refrigerants other than CFCs. However, the process will take decades to complete, even after the refrigerants are no longer in use. But the carbon dioxide issue is less tractable. It seems likely that the earth will experience some surface warming, which will increase the melting of the polar ice caps, and thus raise mean sea level. Given the variables discussed above, there is no consensus on the likely magnitude of the effect. Certainly, the earth has gone through cooling (ice-ages) and heating cycles before, and natural systems have, to a large extent, adapted. The ranges of many species will shift. The habitat available to some will

decrease, to others will increase, and populations will change accordingly.

Nowhere are population pressures more apparent than in the loss of tropical rain forests as land is cleared of trees for primitive agriculture. This is almost certainly the most significant current threat to biological diversity as far as non-aquatic species are concerned. Ironically enough, over a perspective of anything longer than a few years, the rain forests are probably capable of sustainably producing more as forests than as agricultural fields which tend to deplete of nutrients rather quickly. Educating the settlers in these areas will be a challenge.

These tropical rain forests are home year round to large numbers of species of birds, and also the winter home of many of the migrant species which breed in North America. For the species which breed in the northern tier, the population pressures on breeding habitat are not yet severe. Those breeding further south are not as fortunate. Man as a land manager tends not to like undergrowth, and to disdain variety. Monocultures of same age single species plants and trees are not usually attractive to birds or animals. Undergrowth and brush usually is. Fragmentation of woodlands is another problem. Forest edges, although attractive to many birds, render them more vulnerable to predators and cowbird parasitism. The fragments may be just too small in area to sustain a population.

The southern tier of North America is the winter home to many species. And as the population in the south expands, the forests are cut down and fragmented, and much land is consumed into the concrete jungles of the larger cities. Perhaps equally of concern is the disappearance of the coastal prairie habitat, as the land is used from cattle grazing or other agricultural purposes, or is developed. Pressure on wintering habitat can be just as harmful as pressure on breeding habitat. Survival through the first winter is the biggest challenge a bird faces after it successfully fledges. Lack of suitable habitat and pressure from predators sustained by the byproducts of urban and suburban living take a high toll on first winter birds.

The birding community has been particularly successful on the Gulf Coast in acquiring some important coastal habitat used by the neotropical songbirds and shorebirds at a critical stage of their migration. Most of these areas are vulnerable to the effects of tropical storms and hurricanes and should not be developed in any case. Balancing recreational use of some areas with the protection of the wildlife also using them is always a challenge, and not one in which the conservation cause always prevails.

One of the big issues in the first part of the century in the southern United States and many other developed areas is sure to be water. There are large areas of desert and semi-desert that are on the verge of being developed in response to population pressures. But the lack of available water makes conventional development impossible. Ecologically, dams are almost always deleterious, and pressure to remove them is increasing, especially in the north western United States. Equally undesirable are the various forms of river water diversion, for the health of the areas downstream and the coastal estuaries and

bays into which they flow depends on adequate flow and the occasional flushing action of higher flows.

Although continued vigilance is certainly necessary, the severe pollution problems of the twentieth century are already ameliorated. The cause of conservation is probably not furthered by extremist demands to remove the last few percent at great economic cost or lifestyle disruption. Neither zero risk nor zero pollution are practical, nor technically or economically feasible. There are naturally occurring "pollutants" everywhere in the environment and we must recognize that. That is not to say that there are not some further improvements, economically feasible, that can and must be made.

What should be our priorities in creating a culture of conservation? First and foremost, Audubon should continue to be a responsible voice of reason and moderation. Nationally, we should consider focusing on sustainability and the population pressures, as clean air and water are now widely recognized as necessary goals. On a state-wide basis, we need to stay on top of the water issues, and promote a conservation-minded stewardship of the ninety-seven percent of Texas land which is privately owned. It is at a state level that environmental education must continue to be promoted. A conservation minded next generation of Texas residents is essential to continued progress. The coastal plain

from the Sabine to the Rio Grande is inordinately important bird habitat. Also important is the Rio Grande Valley from the mouth of the river upstream to Falcon Dam and beyond. Including the areas on the southern side of the river, this is an economically disadvantaged region of great population pressure, but also an area of great biological significance. Clearing and fragmentation of the habitat is already a severe problem, and the population of the region must be one of the prime targets of environmental education efforts.

Locally, we must continue our efforts. Our coastal wetlands are still threatened by some in local government whose ultimate motive may still be to drain them. Our coastal bird sanctuaries must be conserved and managed with the interests of the birds first and foremost. Restoration of coastal prairie habitat is a desirable goal. Just a little to our north, restoration of more areas in what was the Big Thicket should be a priority. Most importantly, adequately-wide riparian corridors of mixed hardwoods and pines should be restored and managed with wildlife in mind. Additional larger areas, preferably contiguous with existing protected, areas are desirable. But conservation will not happen unless the people and their leaders support it. The goals, the reasons for them and the methods to achieve them must be imprinted on future generations. Environmental education must be the cornerstone of our strategy.

John A. Whittle

Bird Sightings - November 1999

Coverage: Jefferson, Orange, Hardin, Tyler, Jasper, Newton, Angelina, San Augustine and Sabine counties. **Send Reports to:** John Whittle, 3015 Nashville Avenue, Nederland, Texas 77627-6749 by the 10th of the month after or e-mail to whittleja@hal.lamar.edu or call (409) 880-8276 or fax to (409) 880-8270. For "very rare" birds, please submit a brief account of your sighting, including a description of the bird (unless unmistakable), brief details of what it was doing, and where it was seen (if on publicly accessible property). **Format:** "Common" to "abundant" birds are shown in the fashion "JEF 4 reps(25)" which means four reports in Jefferson County totaling 25 birds. Less than "common", as

"JEF-SW 7/5(2) ABC", which means seen in Jefferson County (JEF) at Sabine Woods (SW) on the 5th of July, two (2) birds, reported by observer "ABC".

Commentary: The 144 species reported in November is a good showing. Particularly noteworthy are huge numbers of Sandhill Cranes apparently wintering in north western Jefferson County, near (and across) the Liberty County line. A migrating Whooping Crane was reported in the flock on Nov. 6. The increased number of hummingbirds may partly reflect increases in the number of people maintaining feeders through the winter. Red-breasted Nuthatches and Golden-crowned Kinglets continue in good numbers along the coast.

GREBE, Pied-billed	JEF 2 reps(7)
PELICAN, Amer. White	JEF 1 rep(320)
PELICAN, Brown	JEF 11/6(25) JAW; JEF-SRSP 11/6(6) JAW; JEF-SRSP 11/21(11) JAW; JEF 11/25(2) KS
CORMORANT, Neotropic	JEF 11/6(7) JAW; JEF-PI 11/6(2) JAW; JEF-TX87 11/6(2) JAW; JEF 11/21(1) JAW
CORMORANT, Double-cr.	JEF 1 rep(19)
ANHINGA	JEF 1 rep(4)
HERON, Great Blue	JEF 7 reps(16)
EGRET, Great	JEF 7 reps(49)
EGRET, Snowy	JEF 3 reps(14)
HERON, Little Blue	JEF 1 rep(1)
HERON, Tricolored	JEF 1 rep(1)
EGRET, Reddish	JEF 1 rep(2)
EGRET, Cattle	JEF 3 reps(8)
IBIS, White	JEF 11/7(50) JAW; JEF 11/25(2) JJW; JEF 11/26(10) JAW; JEF 11/28(100) JHW
IBIS, Glossy	JEF 11/26(1) JAW
IBIS, White-faced	JEF 11/7(45) KS; JEF 11/26(12) JAW

IBIS, <i>Plegadis</i>	JEF 11/6(100) JAW; JEF 11/7(275) JAW; JEF 11/21(1000) JAW; JEF 11/25(1400) JJW; JEF-TP 11/28(4) JHW
VULTURE, Turkey	JEF 6 reps(38)
GOOSE, White-fronted	JEF 6 reps(2013)
GOOSE, Snow	JEF 8 reps(4306)
GOOSE, "White"	JEF 1 rep(1000)
GOOSE, Ross's	JEF-TP 11/28(3) JHW
GOOSE, Canada	JEF 11/28(10) JHW
GADWALL	JEF 1 rep(100)
WIGEON, American	JEF 1 rep(8)
MALLARD	JEF 1 rep(30)
DUCK, Mottled	JEF-TP 11/28(3) JHW
TEAL, Blue-winged	JEF 1 rep(25)
SHOVELER, Northern	JEF 3 reps(281)
PINTAIL, Northern	JEF 2 reps(17)
TEAL, Green-winged	JEF 1 rep(50)
DUCK, Ring-necked	JEF 1 rep(7)
SCAUP, Lesser	JEF 1 rep(2)

MERGANSER, Hooded	JEF-TP 11/28(5) JHW	WOODPECKER, Pileated	JEF 1 rep(1)
DUCK, Ruddy	JEF 1 rep(25)	FLYCATCHER, Least	JEF-SW 11/28(1) KS
OSPREY	JEF-TP 11/28(1) JHW	PHOEBE, Eastern	JEF 11 reps(59); ORA 2 reps(2)
KITE, White-tailed	JEF 7 reps(8)	SHRIKE, Loggerhead	JEF 9 reps(130)
HARRIER, Northern	JEF 9 reps(47)	VIREO, Blue-headed	JEF 4 reps(6)
HAWK, Sharp-shinned	JEF 3 reps(4)	JAY, Blue	JEF 2 reps(13)
HAWK, Cooper's	JEF-TXPT 11/6(1) JAW	CROW, American	JEF 1 rep(1)
HAWK, Red-shouldered	JEF 3 reps(4)	CROW, Fish	JEF-TP 11/28(1) JHW
HAWK, Red-tailed	JEF 12 reps(101)	CROW, species	JEF 2 reps(21)
HAWK, Rough-legged	JEF 11/25(1) JJW; JEF 11/28(1) JHW	SWALLOW, Tree	JEF 11/4(1000) JAW; JEF 11/7(42)
CARACARA, Crested	JEF 11/3(2) SK; JEF 11/6(2) JWI; JEF 11/13(3) JFW	JAW; JEF 11/7(35) KS; JEF-SW 11/14(5) KS; JEF 11/21(30) JAW; ORA 11/6(34) KS	
KESTREL, American	JEF 10 reps(101); ORA 1 rep(1)	CHICKADEE, Carolina	JEF 4 reps(6); ORA 1 rep(1)
MERLIN	JEF 11/7(2) JAW; JEF-SW 11/14(1) KS; JEF 11/21(1) JAW	TITMOUSE, Tufted	ORA 2 reps(4)
BOBWHITE, Northern	JEF 4 reps(23)	NUTHATCH, Red-breasted	JEF-SW 11/6(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/28(1) KS
RAIL, Virginia	JEF-TP 11/28(1) JHW	WREN, Carolina	JEF 3 reps(3)
SORA	JEF 1 rep(2)	WREN, House	JEF-SW 11/7(1) KS; JEF-SW 11/21(1) JAW
MOORHEN, Common	JEF 1 rep(2)	WREN, Winter	JEF-SRSP 11/7(1) KS; JEF-SW 11/14(1) KS; JEF-SW 11/25(1) KS; JEF-SW 11/28(1) KS
COOT, American	JEF 1 rep(50)	WREN, Sedge	JEF 11/7(2) JAW; JEF 11/7(2) KS
CRANE, Sandhill	JEF 11/6(200) JWI; 11/6(10) JAW; JEF 11/7(300) JAW; JEF 11/7(300) KS; JEF 11/07(3) SK; JEF 11/25(710) JJW; JEF 11/26(773) JAW; JEF 11/28(850) JHW	WREN, Marsh	JEF-TP 11/28(1) JHW
CRANE, Whooping	JEF 11/6(1) JWI; PLOVER, Black-bellied	KINGLET, Golden-crowned	JEF-SRSP 11/7(2) KS; JEF-SW 11/7(4) KS; JEF-SW 11/10(2) KS; JEF-SW 11/14(2) KS; JEF-SW 11/25(6) KS; JEF-SW 11/28(9) KS
PLOVER, Snowy	JEF 11/6(5) JAW	KINGLET, Ruby-crowned	JEF 6 reps(58); ORA 2 reps(4)
KILLDEER	JEF 6 reps(73)	GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray	JEF 8 reps(53)
STILT, Black-necked	JEF 2 reps(37)	THRUSH, Hermit	JEF-SW 11/10(3) KS; JEF-SW 11/14(1) KS
AVOCET, American	JEF 3 reps(2548)	ROBIN, American	JEF-SW 11/14(8) KS; JEF-SRSP 11/25(1) KS; JEF-SW 11/25(6) KS; JEF-SW 11/28(3) KS; ORA 11/6(1) KS
YELLOWLEGS, Greater	JEF 3 reps(18)	CATBIRD, Gray	JEF-SW 11/10(1) KS; JEF-SW 11/14(2) KS; JEF-SW 11/25(1) KS; JEF-SW 11/28(2) KS
YELLOWLEGS, Lesser	JEF 2 reps(3)	MOCKINGBIRD, Northern	JEF 11 reps(74)
WILLET	JEF 2 reps(10)	THRASHER, Brown	JEF 6 reps(31)
SANDERLING	JEF 3 reps(77)	STARLING, European	JEF 5 reps(196)
SANDPIPER, Western	JEF 2 reps(10)	PIPIT, American	JEF 1 rep(2)
SANDPIPER, Least	JEF 2 reps(30)	WARBLER, Orange-crowned	JEF 6 reps(25)
DUNLIN	JEF 2 reps(3)	WARBLER, Magnolia	JEF-SW 11/14(1) KS
DOWITCHER, Short-billed	JEF-PI 11/6(25) JAW	WARBLER, Yellow-rump.	JEF 7 reps(66); ORA 1 rep(9)
DOWITCHER, Long-billed	JEF 4 reps(541)	WARBLER, Y-r (Audubon's)	JEF 11/25(1) JJW
DOWITCHER species	JEF 1 rep(250)	WARBLER, Yellow-throated	JEF-SRSP 11/25(1) KS
SNIPE, Common	JEF 1 rep(2)	WARBLER, Pine	JEF 2 reps(2)
GULL, Laughing	JEF 3 reps(410)	WARBLER, Palm	JEF-SRSP 11/7(1) KS
GULL, Franklin's	JEF-SRSP 11/6(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 11/21(1) JAW	YELLOWTHROAT, Common	JEF 5 reps(15)
GULL, Ring-billed	JEF 2 reps(95)	WARBLER, Wilson's	JEF-SW 11/14(1) KS
GULL, Herring	JEF 1 rep(1)	CHAT, Yellow-breasted	JEF-SW 11/10(1) KS
TERN, Caspian	JEF 1 rep(81)	TANAGER, Western	JEF-SW 11/25(1) KS; JEF-SW 11/28(1) KS
TERN, Royal	JEF 2 reps(17)	TOWHEE, Eastern	JEF-SW 11/10(1) KS; JEF-SW 11/25(2) KS; JEF-SW 11/28(2) KS
TERN, Common	JEF-SRSP 11/21(7) JAW	SPARROW, Field	JEF-SRSP 11/25(2) KS
TERN, Forster's	JEF 2 reps(76)	SPARROW, Savannah	JEF 6 reps(1439)
DOVE, Rock	JEF 3 reps(20)	SPARROW, Song	JEF-SW 11/10(2) KS; JEF-SW 11/25(2) KS
DOVE, White-winged	JEF-TX87 11/25(1) KS	SPARROW, Swamp	JEF 5 reps(47)
DOVE, Mourning	JEF 10 reps(323)	SPARROW, White-throated	JEF 7 reps(90)
OWL, Barn	JEF-SW 11/10(3) KS	SPARROW, White-crowned	JEF-SW 11/6(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/10(10) KS; JEF-SW 11/14(6) KS; JEF-SW 11/25(2) KS; JEF-SW 11/28(2) KS
OWL, Great Horned	JEF-SW 11/7(1) KS; JEF-SW 11/10(1) KS; JEF-SW 11/25(1) KS	CARDINAL, Northern	JEF 2 reps(3)
NIGHTHAWK, Common	JEF 11/5(1) JAW	BUNTING, Indigo	JEF-SW 11/14(8) KS
HUMMINGBIRD, Buff-bellied	JEF-SW 11/10(1) KS; JEF-SW 11/14(1) KS; JEF-SW 11/21(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/25(1) KS	BLACKBIRD, Red-winged	JEF 4 reps(2130)
HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-thr.	ORA 11/6(1) KS	MEADOWLARK, Eastern	JEF 5 reps(94)
HUMMINGBIRD, Black-chin.	JEF-NEDR 11/5(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 11/8(1) JFW	MEADOWLARK species	JEF 5 reps(83)
HUMMINGBIRD, <i>Archilochus</i>	JEF-NEDR 11/6(1) JAW	BLACKBIRD, Brewer's	JEF 11/21(50) JAW; JEF 11/26(45) JAW
HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous	JEF-BMT 11/17-30(1) RAJ; JEF-NEDR 11/21(2) JAW; JEF-NEDR 11/26(1) JAW	GRACKLE, Common	JEF 4 reps(275)
KINGFISHER, Belted	JEF 7 reps(17)		
WOODPECKER, Red-bellied	JEF 1 rep(1); ORA 2 reps(2)		
SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied	JEF 4 reps(4)		
WOODPECKER, Downy	JEF 4 reps(12)		
FLICKER, Northern	JEF 2 reps(2)		

GRACKLE, Boat-tailed	JEF 2 reps(34)
GRACKLE, Great-tailed	JEF 2 reps(92)
COWBIRD, Brown-headed	JEF 3 reps(578)
BLACKBIRD species	JEF 1 rep(20)
GOLDFINCH, American	JEF-SW 11/25(5) KS; JEF-SW 11/28(15) KS; JEF-TP 11/28(1) JHW
SPARROW, House	JEF 4 reps(66)

Number of Species 144
Number of Individuals 2672

County Abbreviations:
JEF - Jefferson; ORA - Orange

Location Codes:
BMT - Beaumont; NEDR - Nederland; PI - Pleasure Island, Port Arthur; SRSP - Sea Rim State Park; SW - Sabine Woods; TP - Tyrrell Park incl. Cattail Marsh; TX87 - Texas 87 Pt. Arthur-Sabine Pass-Sea Rim; TXPT - Road to Pilot Station at Texas Point.

Observer Abbreviations:
JAW - John Whittle; JFW - Jana Whittle; JHW - John Haynes and John Whittle; JJW - John and Jana Whittle; JWL - Jane and Larry Wilson; KS - Ken Sztraky; RAJ - Rose Ann Jordan; SK - Steve Kuritz.

Whooping Crane -- 6 November 1999 -- Jane and Larry Wilson
Seen in the morning in a large flock of Sandhill Cranes near Ebner Road, western Jefferson County, on the Jefferson/Liberty County Line. The crane stood out from the other cranes on the group as being about six inches taller. The bird was pure white, with black wing tips -- tips only. The observers are familiar with the pattern on a Wood Stork, and with White Ibis. The subject bird was markedly larger than the Sandhill Cranes on the ground and in the air.

Rough-legged Hawk -- 25, 28 November -- John Whittle
Seen in far west Jefferson County, just south of Blair Road on Nov. 25 and along Johnson Road on Nov. 28. Large *Buteo*, similar in size to Red-tailed. On both occasions, attention was drawn to bird by the solid dark belly band. When it flew on Nov. 25, the base of the tail was seen to be white, the rest of the upper surfaces of the tail appeared brown. There were white "half-moon" markings on the wings at the base of the primaries. When it flew on Nov. 28, the base of the tail was seen to be white, and dark circular patches were seen at the wrist on the underwing. Full confirmation of the absence of a patagial mark was not possible on either sighting.

Buff-bellied Hummingbird -- November 10, 14, 25 -- Ken Sztraky
Seen at Sabine Woods. See notes in last month's Brown Pelican.

Least Flycatcher -- November 28 -- Ken Sztraky
Bird was seen actively flycatching in the tree tops at Sabine Woods. At times the bird was near a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and seemed slightly larger. Uniform gray color on its back and a paler white-gray underneath. Complete white eye ring and a pair of whitish wing bars. Two toned bill, the top was dark (black) and the lower bill was pale yellow-orange. While the bird not vocalize it did exhibit the frequent upward "flick" of its tail.

Magnolia Warbler -- November 14 -- Ken Sztraky
Bird was seen in a mixed feeding flock in the tree tops at Sabine Woods. Bird had breast and flank streaking (black) on a yellow colored underbody and white wing and tail patches. Bird was olive color above.

Wilson's Warbler -- November 14 -- Ken Sztraky
Seen at Sabine Woods. This yellow bird was slowly moving along

the ground to low brush four feet in front of the observer. Besides a yellow body color the bird a dark black skull cap.

Yellow-breasted Chat -- November 10 -- Ken Sztraky
Seen at Sabine Woods. This large warbler was seen perched on a Lantana bush looking about. Bird was yellow breasted and white below that. Bird had white spectacles and was greenish above.

Western Tanager (male) -- November 25, 28 -- Ken Sztraky
Seen in Sabine Woods in the open tree tops. Bird was seen Nov. 25 near a Myrtle Warbler and a Yellow-shafted Flicker for size comparison. Yellowish conical bill, not pointed like an oriole. Green-yellow color over its entire body. Back had fine streaking. Two wing bars, the top being yellow and the bottom being white.

Erratum

Owing to a glitch in the computer program used to compile the sightings section, an erroneous report of Lesser Goldfinches appeared in the report of October's sightings last month. Please delete the entry!

Sea Rim State Park CBC - January 2, 2000

Twenty-nine observers saw 153 species (provisional tally) on this count, which was conducted in warm and generally sunny weather. The following is a brief summary of some of the notable finds and misses. A complete account will appear in next month's Brown Pelican

The generally dry conditions seemingly led to some unusual distribution patterns among the waterbirds, while sea fog which persisted all day probably robbed the count of some potentially "good" species. Ducks were generally very scarce except in the Lost Lake area of Murphree WMA (not publicly accessible), where there were spectacular concentrations of Pied-billed Grebes and Canvasbacks in particular. Remarkable too were the sightings of four owl species, Great Horned, Barn, Barred and Short-eared. Although the preceding day had seen a single scan of the Gulf at Sea Rim produce an incredible 115 Northern Gannets and all three Scoter species, in the reduced visibility of count day, only White-winged Scoter could be located.

Sabine Woods was enigmatic. At least six American Woodcocks were there, as well as a Northern Bobwhite, two Eastern Towhees and a Black-chinned Hummingbird. But there were very few Robins; none of the overshooting woodland birds such as Brown Creeper or Red-breasted Nuthatch could be found, although Golden-crowned Kinglets were there.

Unusual species included a Solitary Sandpiper and three American Oystercatchers (very rare in Jefferson County) seen from the road to the Pilot Station at Texas Point, and a Rough-legged Hawk on the outskirts of Sabine Pass. As expected, Eurasian Collared Dove was added to the count species list. Notable "misses" included Red-breasted Merganser and Red-bellied Woodpecker. No Tree Swallows were seen.

John A. Whittle

Field Trip to Anahuac NWR -- 20 November 1999

A clear but slightly chilly morning greeted birders at the entrance to Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge for the November field trip of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society. An excellent turn out was noted with field trip veterans and first timers in attendance. It did not take long for the birding to start as keen-eyed observers spotted a Northern Harrier and several Savannah Sparrows. But nothing says winter birding on the Upper Texas Coast better than waterfowl, especially the huge flocks of geese that Anahuac is famous for, and we were not disappointed. Snow Geese, as usual, were the most numerous but good numbers of Greater White-fronted Geese were also on the move. A Ross's Goose was noted in a flock of Snows flying over the entrance.

Moving out from the entrance, the group first stopped to visit the stand of willows on the way to Shoveler Pond. The pond usually present at this site was completely dry as our area drought continues to make its presence felt. A large bird flying out of the trees upon our arrival was probably an owl but no one got a good enough look for a sure I.D. Songbirds were plentiful in the area; unfortunately most were Brown-headed Cowbirds. A few American Robins and a single Ruby-crowned Kinglet were also present. There was more bird activity on the other side of the road including good looks at several White-crowned Sparrows and dozens of American Goldfinches.

At Shoveler Pond, the group stopped to scan the usual throng of birds. Bird numbers were decent but diversity was low. Green-winged Teal were the most obvious of the birds present but Dowitchers were numerous as well. The sharp ears of co-leader John Whittle detected at least one Short-billed Dowitcher among the many Long-billeds present. Other shorebirds noted in the crowd included Least Sandpiper, Dunlin, plus Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs. Coots and Moorhens were obvious, while a Northern Shoveler was oddly non-cooperative. Meanwhile, the sharp eyes of Don and Pat Jeane produced a very cooperative American Bittern. A group of British birders nearby located a second American Bittern!

Co-leader Steve Mayes encountered a minor automobile problem at this point as a flat tire threatened to derail the rest of the trip. Luckily, the spare was in good shape and was put on by the good hands of Don Fisher and Herb Stafford (thanks again!).

One problem with "caravan" bird trips is that the lead car(s) often scare off birds before trailing birders get a look. In this way, a darting Virginia Rail and a distant Osprey were spotted by one of the co-leaders and other birds were probably also only seen by a few. Unfortunately, birding a large site like Anahuac requires the use of multiple cars and inevitably, no one will see everything.

Many of the usual avian residents of Anahuac showed themselves including waders like Great Egret, Snowy Egret, Great Blue Heron, Little Blue Heron, and Black-crowned Night-Heron. Eastern Phoebes, common winter residents, were numerous and Loggerhead Shrikes were obvious. Several Belted Kingfishers were found along with White and White-faced Ibis. Swamp Sparrows and a Marsh Wren were seen near Shoveler Pond. Some of the raptors seen at the

refuge were Red-tailed Hawk, White-tailed Kite, and American Kestrel.

Leaving the Shoveler Pond loop, the group traveled on the road toward East Bay. Outside of the usual waders and a few Pied-billed Grebes, few birds were noted. Upon reaching the bay, few new birds were added but a skittish Long-billed Curlew and a Willet or two were noted. From there, the birders regrouped at the refuge entrance to eat lunch and decide on the next course of action. Some called it a day but many continued on to an area of west Jefferson County near the Liberty County line where a large flock of Sandhill Cranes had been recently seen. Several Meadowlarks and a Sharp-shinned Hawk bid us farewell from the refuge.

The road to the Crane site saw numerous Red-tailed Hawks and a large flock of dark Ibis, probably White-faced. Upon reaching our destination (Ebner Road near Hwy 1406), we began scanning the surrounding fields for our quarry. We turned up Savannah Sparrows and Turkey Vultures and a large flock of Snow Geese but no cranes. Sandhill Cranes are often hard to come by in Jefferson County and this proved true once again as the birds did not show themselves. (They have been seen in this area subsequently, although they seem to range widely, and are best located as they fly away to roost -- Ed.)

Even without the cranes, the trip had to be considered a success. Any trip that produces two American Bitterns in the (relative) open within 100 yards of each other has to be special. So, with that in mind, the GTAS birders declared an end to the field trip and returned to their respective homes. Or, in one case, to the Wal-Mart Auto Center to patch a tire.

The following species and numbers were recorded on the trip:

Pied-billed Grebe (6); Laughing Gull (10); Double-crested Cormorant (1); Green-winged Teal (13); Blue-winged Teal (4); Northern Shoveler (6); Snow Goose (140); "White" Goose (2000); Ross's Goose (1); Greater White-fronted Goose (29); White Ibis (21); White-faced Ibis (1); American Bittern (3); Great Blue Heron (3); Great Egret (6); Snowy Egret (6); Little Blue Heron (2); Black-crowned Night-Heron (4); Virginia Rail (1); Common Moorhen (10); American Coot (5); Common Snipe (1); Short-billed Dowitcher (1); Long-billed Dowitcher (1); Dowitcher species (200); Least Sandpiper (10); Dunlin (2); Greater Yellowlegs (1); Lesser Yellowlegs (2); Willet (1); Long-billed Curlew (1); Killdeer (4); Mourning Dove (19); Turkey Vulture (7); White-tailed Kite (2); Northern Harrier (12); Sharp-shinned Hawk (3); Red-tailed Hawk (12); American Kestrel (33); Osprey (1); Belted Kingfisher (2); Eastern Phoebe (15); European Starling (10); Brown-headed Cowbird (71); Red-winged Blackbird (57); Eastern Meadowlark (1); Meadowlark species (18); Great-tailed Grackle (2); American Goldfinch (50); Savannah Sparrow (15); White-crowned Sparrow (4); Swamp Sparrow (1); Loggerhead Shrike (22); Yellow-rumped Warbler (10); Common Yellowthroat (2); Northern Mockingbird (7); American Robin (2); Eastern Bluebird (1); Total species (55).

Steve Mayes

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Below is a listing of Rare Bird Alert telephone numbers for nearby areas. Transcriptions of current tapes are available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.petersononline.com/birds/-hotline/birdcntr.htm>.

Detailed information (maps and text) on birding sites on the Upper Texas Coast is also available on the Web at <http://texasbirding.simplenet.com>.

This includes all the Jefferson County hotspots published in early issues.

Golden Triangle	(409) 768-1340
Texas (Houston)	(713) 369-9673
Abilene	(915) 691-8981
Austin	(512) 926-8751
Ft. Worth (N. Cent)	(817) 329-1930
Lubbock	(806) 797-6690
N. E. Texas	(903) 839-4804
Rio Grande Valley	(210) 969-2731
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