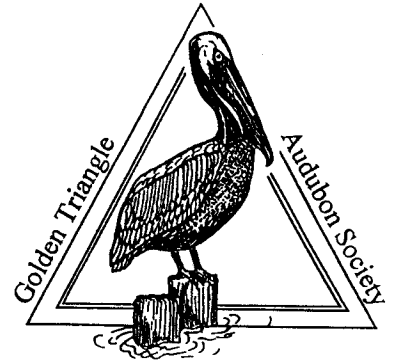


# *Brown Pelican*

**Scanned from Originals**

# The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 6 No. 5

May 2000

## Membership Meeting

Thursday, May 18, 2000

6:30 PM, Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont

Sydney Island and Colonial Waterbirds

Sue Bailey

In the 1980s, Sydnes or Sydney Island -- different maps show different spellings -- in Sabine Lake near Bridge City hosted a thriving colony of colonial waterbirds, most especially Roseate Spoonbills. Unfortunately, the waterbirds have moved on, as they are wont to do after a few years. Sue Bailey will talk about the island in its heyday.

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.

## April Meeting Report

Jace Stansbury made his speaking debut on Thursday, April 20, 2000, at the membership meeting of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society. Jace has been a Purple Martin landlord for six years. He has maintained 32 gourds and two conventional martin houses. In the last three years, he has erected additional gourds. According to his records, in 1999, Jace had 22 nesting pairs that laid 194 eggs and fledged 70 young.

With a slide presentation provided by the Purple Martin Conservation Association, we learned a lot more about Purple Martins and how to manage their houses. The program identified the Purple Martin's basic biology, feeding habits, predators and nest site competitors, housing and management, and population trends. The Purple Martin is the largest North American swallow and the only bird species that is almost totally dependent on people to supply it with nest sites in the form of houses and gourds.

Like all swallows, martins are aerial insectivores; all they eat is insects caught in flight. Their diet includes dragonflies, damselflies, flies, beetles, moths, butterflies, grasshoppers, flying ants, bees, wasps, midges, leafhoppers, stink bugs, spiders, etc. As you can see there is no mention of the mosquito. Researchers performed autopsies on several hundred martins and found only one mosquito. They also eat glass to help grind in their crop.

One of the reasons Purple Martins have declined is in part due to the introduction of two nonnative species that compete with

*Continued on page 7*

Please remember the Sabine Woods Work Day -- Saturday June 3 -- see page 2 for details.

## *The Brown Pelican*

Vol. 6, No. 5 May 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.

### May 6 -- Birdblitz 2000 at Anahuac NWR.

Anahuac NWR is celebrating International Migratory Bird Day a week early (and may well find many more warblers and other neotropical migrants than if they waited). They plan to survey the entire Refuge for resident and migratory birds. The Refuge has established a goal of identifying 2000 species (of all forms of life) in the year 2000. Meet at the Visitor Contact Center at Anahuac NWR, reached by travelling south along the access road off FM1985 about 12 miles west of Highway 124 in Chambers County at 7:00 a.m. Call Michelle Hannon, (409) 267-3337 for more information.

### May 13 -- North American Migration Count - Jefferson County.

See box on this page for details.

### May 18 -- Membership Meeting.

See front page for details.

### June 3 -- Sabine Woods Work Day

Please come help keep the woods in tip-top shape. Even though we hope to be able to have a contractor do some of the extensive tallow and wild rose control work, there are some tasks that only we can do. These include grape vine control and trail maintenance inside the woods, and perhaps some other "inside the woods" work. We will start around 7:30 a.m. and will almost certainly cease by 11:00 a.m. or so before it gets too hot. Please bring insect repellent, gloves, pruning shears, and rotary lawnmowers.

### The Society does not hold Membership Meetings in June or July.

### Aug. 17 - Membership Meeting.

Details not yet available. Watch this space in the next *Brown Pelican*.

### Aug. 26 - Field Trip.

Traditionally, we look for shorebirds in late August as shorebird migration is then in full swing. The drought that prevails this year may reduce the possible choices of location for this field trip. Watch this space in the July/August issue, which will be published in early August.

### Sep. 21 -- Membership Meeting.

Details in later issues.

## Southeast Texas Migration Celebration - 2000 "Spread Your Wings"

After a little thunderstorm and some much needed rain Friday night, Saturday, March 11 turned into a perfect day for festivities in Orange, sponsored by the Big Thicket Loop Association. The new Department of Transportation Travel Information Center was the center of attention offering several activities for everyone. This Center is a spectacular site with a picnic area, a very large and well stocked information area, a boardwalk system that allows access to Blue Elbow Swamp and the surrounding bottomland forest. This is the first site on the Upper Texas Coast Birding Trail Map (Tony Houseman SP and WMA). Many area communities/counties had booth displays on the boardwalk, getting people to wander outside of the center. Our booth was a downsized version of our House with a Heart booth. Everyone was impressed with the setups and appreciated all the information they received. There was a steady stream of people from 10:00 to 2:00, some coming from Canada, Denmark, several states and surrounding areas who were very interested in birding and gardens. Ted Eubanks discussed "A History of the Birding Trail and its impact on Southeast Texas". We should all be very proud of the diversity within the SE Texas area. Everyone that participated in this event was certainly very proud to be there. Thanks to our volunteers Joe Halbrook, Jana Whittle, Jeannie Lanclos, Harrison Jordan and Eric Sztraky!!!! Oh, I almost forgot. It was very, very windy.

*Jeannie Lanclos*

## Migration Count Saturday May 13

This will be the seventh year in which we have conducted a migration count in Jefferson County. This count, carried out on the second Saturday in May is designed to capture a snapshot of migration across the continental United States. As a result, it comes at the very end of migration season in Southeast Texas. We will aim to survey as much of Jefferson County as we can. Any help you can provide will be welcome, even if it is only a few hours in the critical early morning hours, when birds are at their most active and easily observed. Please contact John Whittle at 409-722-4193 (H) or 409-880-8276 (W). Please leave messages on the latter as they can be retrieved remotely. Because of travel commitments, it will be Friday before area assignments can be made.

## Bird Sightings - March 2000

**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 161 species reported in March is typical for the first month of spring migration. Shorebirds are quite prominent in the listing, and several of the early migrating warblers also showed up. Eurasian Collared-Doves continue to expand in the area in reports are anything to go by, although reports of White-winged Doves seem rather scarce. We hear from many people that they regularly visit feeders in Port Arthur, and there are still some around Sabine Pass. Has anyone been seeing them in Beaumont recently? Glossy Ibis seem to be slowly increasing in the area -- this does not appear to be an artifact of more careful identification of the birds in groups of dark ibis. Both Eastern and Spotted Towhee (females of both species) have wintered in Sabine Woods and it is interesting to receive reports of both species from the same place.

GREBE, Pied-billed	JEF 5 reps(79)	PINTAIL, Northern	JEF 1 rep(2)
GREBE, Eared	JEF 1 rep(1)	TEAL, Green-winged	JEF 1 rep(510); ORA 1 rep(20)
PELICAN, American White	JEF 4 reps(107)	DUCK, Ring-necked	JEF 2 reps(125)
PELICAN, Brown	JEF-SRSP 3/4(24) JAW; JEF-TX87 3/4(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 3/12(15) JAW	SCAUP, Greater	JEF-TP 3/5(2) JAW; JEF-TXPT 3/19(2) JAW
CORMORANT, Neotropic	JEF 7 reps(104); ORA 1 rep(31)	SCAUP, Lesser	JEF 3 reps(35)
CORMORANT, Double-crested	JEF 6 reps(14)	OLDSQUAW	JEF 3/12(1) RBA; JEF-TXPT 3/19(1) JAW
ANHINGA	JEF 4 reps(4)	BUFFLEHEAD	JEF 1 rep(2)
HERON, Great Blue	JEF 6 reps(9)	DUCK, Ruddy	JEF 3 reps(25)
EGRET, Great	JEF 10 reps(74); ORA 1 rep(5)	OSPREY	JEF 3/12(1) JAW
EGRET, Snowy	JEF 4 reps(28); ORA 1 rep(1)	KITE, White-tailed	JEF 3 reps(4)
HERON, Little Blue	JEF 6 reps(20)	HARRIER, Northern	JEF 10 reps(22)
HERON, Tricolored	JEF 1 rep(2)	HAWK, Sharp-shinned	JEF 3/5(1) JAW; JEF 3/5(1) KS; JEF-TP 3/5(1) JAW; JEF 3/17(1) JAW; JEF-SW 3/19(1) JAW
EGRET, Cattle	JEF 7 reps(142)	HAWK, Cooper's	JEF 3/5(1) JAW
HERON, Green	JEF 3/5(1) KS; JEF 3/26(1) KS	HAWK, Red-shouldered	JEF 3 reps(3)
NIGHT-HERON, Black-crowned	JEF 3 reps(4)	HAWK, Broad-winged	JEF 3/17(1) JAW
NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-cr.	JEF 3/5(1) KS; JEF 3/12(1) KS; JEF-SW 3/12(1) JAW; JEF-SW 3/19(1) JAW	HAWK, Red-tailed	JEF 11 reps(44)
IBIS, White	JEF 3/5(1) KS; JEF-TP 3/5(11) JAW; JEF-TX87 3/12(2) JAW; JEF-TXPT 3/19(2) JAW	HAWK, Red-tailed (Kriider's)	JEF-SW 3/4(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 3/12(1) JAW
IBIS, Glossy	JEF 3/5(1) JAW; JEF 3/12(1) JAW	KESTREL, American	JEF 10 reps(90)
IBIS, White-faced	JEF 3/4(3) JAW; JEF 3/5(19) JAW; JEF-TP 3/5(71) JAW; JEF 3/12(31) JAW	MERLIN	JEF-TX87 3/12(1) JAW
IBIS, Plegadis	JEF 3/4(25) JAW; JEF 3/5(1) JAW; JEF 3/5(1) KS; JEF-TP 3/5(11) JAW; JEF-TX87 3/9(50) JAW; JEF-TX87 3/11(1) JAW JEF 3/12(45) JAW; JEF-SRSP 3/12(10) JAW; JEF 3/19(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 3/19(20) JAW	SORA	JEF 2 reps(6)
SPOONBILL, Roseate	JEF 3/4(5) JAW; JEF-TX87 3/9(3) JAW; JEF-TXPT 3/19(60) JAW; ORA 3/11(1) JAW	MOORHEN, Common	JEF 4 reps(14)
VULTURE, Black	JEF 4 reps(77)	COOT, American	JEF 6 reps(2078); ORA 1 rep(135)
VULTURE, Turkey	JEF 9 reps(58)	PLOVER, Black-bellied	JEF 2 reps(94)
WHISTLING-DUCK, Black-bell.	JEF-TX87 3/9(42) JAW; JEF-SW 3/11(2) JAW	GOLDEN-PLOVER, American	JEF 3/19(45) JAW
WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous	JEF 3/11(2) JAW; JEF-SRSP 3/12(8) JAW	PLOVER, Piping	JEF 1 rep(1)
GOOSE, White-fronted	JEF 1 rep(170)	KILLDEER	JEF 6 reps(108)
GOOSE, Snow	JEF 1 rep(300)	STILT, Black-necked	JEF 3 reps(96)
GADWALL	JEF 2 reps(272); ORA 1 rep(2)	AVOCET, American	JEF 2 reps(60)
WIGEON, American	JEF 2 reps(4)	YELLOWLEGS, Greater	JEF 3 reps(31)
MALLARD	JEF 3 reps(7)	YELLOWLEGS, Lesser	JEF 3 reps(66)
DUCK, Mottled	JEF 3/4(2) JAW; JEF 3/5(23) JAW; JEF 3/5(2) KS; JEF-TP 3/5(2) JAW; JEF 3/12(17) JAW; JEF-TX87 3/19(2) JAW	SANDPIPER, Solitary	JEF-TP 3/5(1) JAW; JEF 3/12(2) JAW
TEAL, Blue-winged	JEF 6 reps(1684); ORA 1 rep(50)	WILLET	JEF 3 reps(22)
TEAL, Cinnamon	JEF-TP 3/5(2) JAW	CURLEW, Long-billed	JEF 2 reps(12)
SHOVELER, Northern	JEF 2 reps(2010); ORA 1 rep(7)	KNOT, Red	JEF-SRSP 3/4(3) JAW; JEF-SRSP 3/12(2) JAW
		SANDERLING	JEF 2 reps(225)
		SANDPIPER, Western	JEF 2 reps(6)
		SANDPIPER, Least	JEF 3 reps(113)
		SANDPIPER, Pectoral	JEF-TP 3/5(23) JAW; JEF 3/12(36) JAW; JEF 3/19(1) JAW
		DUNLIN	JEF 1 rep(39)

SANDPIPER, Stilt JAW JEF 3/12(6) JAW; JEF 3/19(20)  
SANDPIPER, Buff-breasted JEF 3/19(1) JAW  
DOWITCHER, Short-billed JEF-TXPT 3/19(1) JAW  
DOWITCHER, Long-billed JEF 3 reps(150)  
SNIPE, Common JEF 5 reps(38)  
GULL, Laughing JEF 5 reps(285)  
GULL, Bonaparte's JEF 1 rep(21)  
GULL, Ring-billed JEF 6 reps(647); ORA 1 rep(10)  
GULL, Herring JEF 2 reps(12)  
TERN, Caspian JEF 4 reps(5); ORA 1 rep(1)  
TERN, Royal JEF 3 reps(262)  
TERN, Forster's JEF 3 reps(71); ORA 1 rep(2)  
SKIMMER, Black JEF 2 reps(125)  
DOVE, Rock JEF 4 reps(36)  
COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian JEF 3/5(2) JAW; JEF 3/5(1) KS;  
JEF-SW 3/11(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 3/12(2) JAW  
DOVE, Mourning JEF 10 reps(172)  
DOVE, Inca JEF 4 reps(4)  
OWL, Great Horned JEF 3/5(3) KS; JEF 3/12(2) KS;  
JEF 3/26(1) KS  
OWL, Barred JEF-TP 3/5(1) JAW  
SWIFT, Chimney JEF-NEDR 3/31(9) JAW  
HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-thr. JEF-SW 3/12(1) JAW; JEF-SW  
3/19(3) JAW  
KINGFISHER, Belted JEF 9 reps(19)  
WOODPECKER, Red-bellied JEF 4 reps(19)  
SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied JEF 6 reps(8)  
WOODPECKER, Downy JEF 9 reps(22)  
FLICKER, Northern JEF 1 rep(1)  
WOODPECKER, Pileated JEF 1 rep(1)  
PHOEBE, Eastern JEF 4 reps(14)  
FLYCATCHER, Gt. Crested JEF-SW 3/19(1) GD  
KINGBIRD, Eastern JEF 3/26(2) KS  
SHRIKE, Loggerhead JEF 9 reps(192)  
VIREO, White-eyed JEF 5 reps(14)  
VIREO, Yellow-throated JEF-SW 3/11(1) JAW; JEF-SW  
3/12(1) JAW; JEF-SW 3/15(1) GD; JEF-SW 3/19(2) GD;  
JEF-SW 3/19(2) JAW  
VIREO, Blue-headed JEF 1 rep(1)  
JAY, Blue JEF 9 reps(45)  
CROW, American JEF 2 reps(9)  
CROW, Fish JEF-TP 3/5(54) JAW; JEF-TX87  
3/11(3) JAW; JEF 3/12(10) JAW  
CROW, species JEF 3 reps(11); ORA 1 rep(1)  
MARTIN, Purple JEF 8 reps(41); ORA 3 reps(7)  
SWALLOW, Tree JEF 6 reps(193); ORA 2  
reps(102)  
SWALLOW, Cave JEF-SRSP 3/8(3) JS; JEF-SRSP  
3/9(3) JAW  
SWALLOW, Barn JEF-SRSP 3/9(4) JAW; JEF-SW  
3/11(1) JAW; JEF 3/12(1) JAW; JEF 3/12(4) KS;  
JEF-SRSP 3/12(1) JAW; JEF 3/19(1) JAW; ORA 3/11(1)  
JAW  
CHICKADEE, Carolina JEF 6 reps(19)  
NUTHATCH, Red-breasted JEF-SW 3/15(1) GD  
WREN, Carolina JEF 3 reps(3)  
WREN, House JEF-SW 3/4(1) GD; JEF 3/5(1)  
KS; JEF 3/12(1) KS; JEF-SW 3/12(1) JAW  
WREN, Marsh JEF 3/5(1) JAW; JEF-TP 3/12(2)  
JAW  
KINGLET, Golden-crowned JEF 3/5(6) KS  
KINGLET, Ruby-crowned JEF 8 reps(40)  
GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray JEF 8 reps(40)  
BLUEBIRD, Eastern JEF 1 rep(7); ORA 1 rep(3)  
THRUSH, Hermit JEF-SW 3/4(1) JAW; JEF-SW  
3/15(1) GD  
ROBIN, American JEF 10 reps(50)  
CATBIRD, Gray JEF-SW 3/4(2) JAW; JEF-SW

3/11(1) JAW; JEF 3/12(1) KS; JEF-SW 3/19(1) JAW;  
JEF-SW 3/26(1) KS  
MOCKINGBIRD, Northern JEF 9 reps(87); ORA 1 rep(1)  
THRASHER, Brown JEF 10 reps(52)  
STARLING, European JEF 8 reps(200)  
WAXWING, Cedar JEF 5 reps(152)  
WARBLER, Orange-crowned JEF 9 reps(21)  
PARULA, Northern JEF-SW 3/4(6) GD; JEF 3/12(1)  
KS; JEF-SW 3/12(1) JAW; JEF-SW 3/15(10) GD; JEF-SW  
3/17(3) GD; JEF-SW 3/19(2) GD; JEF-SW 3/19(3) JAW;  
JEF-SW 3/26(2) GD; JEF-SW 3/26(2) KS; ORA 3/30(1) KS  
WARBLER, Yellow-rumped JEF 13 reps(242)  
WARBLER, Yell.-r. (Audubon's) JEF-SW 3/26(1) GD; JEF-SW  
3/26(1) KS  
WARBLER, Yellow-throated JEF-SW 3/12(1) JAW; JEF-SW  
3/15(1) GD  
WARBLER, Pine JEF 1 rep(2)  
WARBLER, Palm JEF 3/5(1) KS; JEF-TP 3/5(2)  
JAW; JEF 3/12(8) KS; JEF 3/26(4) KS  
WARBLER, Black-and-white JEF-SW 3/4(5) GD; JEF-SW  
3/12(6) JAW; JEF-SW 3/15(3) GD; JEF-SW 3/17(4) GD;  
JEF-SW 3/19(1) GD; JEF-SW 3/19(4) JAW; JEF-SW  
3/26(3) GD; JEF-SW 3/26(2) KS  
WATERTHRUSH, Louisiana JEF-SW 3/15(2) GD; JEF-SW  
3/17(1) GD  
YELLOWTHROAT, Common JEF 7 reps(15)  
WARBLER, Hooded JEF-SW 3/12(1) JAW; JEF-SW  
3/15(1) GD; JEF-SW 3/17(4) GD; JEF-SW 3/19(1) JAW;  
JEF-SW 3/26(4) GD; JEF-SW 3/26(3) KS  
TOWHEE, Spotted JEF-SW 3/12(1) JAW; JEF-SW  
3/19(1) JAW  
TOWHEE, Eastern JEF-SW 3/12(1) JAW; JEF-SW  
3/15(1) GD; JEF-SW 3/19(1) JAW; JEF-SW 3/26(1) KS  
SPARROW, Chipping JEF 1 rep(2); ORA 1 rep(4)  
SPARROW, Field JEF 3/5(2) KS; JEF 3/12(1) KS;  
JEF 3/26(1) KS  
SPARROW, Savannah JEF 9 reps(246)  
SPARROW, Song JEF 5 reps(13)  
SPARROW, Lincoln's JEF-SW 3/4(1) JAW; JEF 3/5(6)  
KS; JEF 3/12(6) KS  
SPARROW, Swamp JEF 3 reps(5); ORA 1 rep(1)  
SPARROW, White-throated JEF 8 reps(169)  
SPARROW, White-crowned JEF 3/12(1) JAW  
CARDINAL, Northern JEF 9 reps(47)  
GROSBEAK, Rose-breasted JEF-SW 3/26(1) GD; JEF-SW  
3/26(1) KS  
BUNTING, Indigo JEF-SW 3/26(2) GD; JEF-SW  
3/26(4) KS  
BLACKBIRD, Red-winged JEF 8 reps(1674); ORA 1 rep(25)  
MEADOWLARK, Eastern JEF 6 reps(54)  
MEADOWLARK species JEF 3 reps(22)  
BLACKBIRD, Brewer's JEF 3/5(10) JAW  
GRACKLE, Common JEF 7 reps(1476)  
GRACKLE, Boat-tailed JEF 4 reps(187)  
GRACKLE, Great-tailed JEF 6 reps(711)  
COWBIRD, Brown-headed JEF 4 reps(214)  
FINCH, House JEF-NEDR 3/12(2) JAW  
GOLDFINCH, American JEF 4 reps(8); ORA 2 reps(18)  
SPARROW, House JEF 4 reps(17); ORA 1 rep(7)

Number of Species 161  
Number of Individuals 18596

County Abbreviations:  
JEF - Jefferson; ORA - Orange

Location Codes:  
MCFW - McFaddin NWR; NEDR - Nederland; SRSP - Sea Rim State  
Park; SW - Sabine Woods; TP - Tyrrell Park incl. Cattail Marsh; TX87 -

**Observer Abbreviations:**

GD - Gerald Duhon; JAW - John Whittle; JS - Jace Stansbury; KS - Ken Sztraky; RBA - Texas Rare Bird Alert

## Notes on Very Rare Birds

### **Oldsquaw - 12,19 Mar. 2000 - RBA and Merry Cox, John Whittle**

A female Oldsquaw (soon to be renamed Long-tailed Duck) was reported on the Texas Rare Bird Alert as having been seen on Mar. 12 on the Sabine-Neches Waterway from the Sabine Pass Battleground. Presumably the same bird was seen on Mar. 19 at close range in a flock of Scaup on the waterway about a mile north of the Pilot Station at Texas Point.

### **Buff-breasted Sandpiper - 19 Mar 2000 - John Whittle**

A rather early Buff-breasted Sandpiper was seen in a small pocket of water standing in a field on Wilber Road about a mile south of Texas 73.

### **Yellow-rumped (Audubon's) Warbler - 26 Mar 2000 -- Gerald Duhon, Ken Sztraky**

A Yellow-rumped warbler of the Audubon's race (which will probably eventually be restored to separate species status) was detected in Sabine Woods on Mar 26. This race is distinguished from the Myrtle race in all plumages by its yellow throat.

## Spring Migration 2000 - First Impressions

Although at the time of writing -- the last few days of April -- migration is still in progress, a very preliminary report may be of interest. As with all reports on migration on the coast, it should be borne in mind that what we see, particularly in respect of the passerine migrants, represents a variable fraction of the birds actually crossing the Gulf of Mexico. Only in adverse weather conditions do most migrants arriving on the coast drop into the coastal woodlots.

Shorebirds have been very difficult to find this spring in and around the Golden Triangle, as the number of rice fields in cultivation has been at an all time low. In addition, new methods enable rice farmers to prepare very flat fields, which require less water, and with the result that the few fields that there are only have "shorebird-depth" water for a very short period as each field drains uniformly.

Overall so far, the impression is that those species which migrate early were a little late, and were seen in small numbers compared to some previous years. Those species normally passing through in April seemed to be a little early and generally were seen in quite "good" numbers. The weekends of April 14/15/16 and 21/22/23 both provided excellent birding, with the latter surpassing the former in both numbers and variety. It is too early to tell about the "late" migrants, although migration was rather slow during the last week of April.

The drought is perhaps more evident on the immediate

coast of Jefferson County than elsewhere, as showers seems to have avoided the coastal strip to a large extent. Not surprisingly, without wet areas, waterthrushes have been very scarce. On the other hand, the dry leafy areas have persuaded thrushes and catbirds to pause in Sabine Woods in large numbers.

Northern Parulas are often the first warblers which can be reasonably confidently tagged as "migrants", although they may well be preceded by migrant Yellow-rumped Warblers which are not distinguishable from winter residents. Six seen in Sabine Woods on March 6 were quite early. Other March migrants included Yellow-throated Warblers on March 12 and 15 and Hooded Warblers, as usual, were evident most days from March 12 on. Among the few Louisiana Waterthrushes seen were those on March 15 (2) and 17. Four very early Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were reported on March 26. An Audubon's race Yellow-rumped Warbler was seen in Sabine Woods on March 26, followed by others on April 8 and 15.

Early April provided interesting but not unusual birding, with Ovenbirds and Kentucky Warblers perhaps more evident than usual. Yellow-breasted Chats were also numerous. By mid-April, thrushes were numerous, especially Wood Thrushes, but also Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes. During the period 21-23 April, Gray Catbirds were present in Sabine Woods in very large numbers along with the other Thrushes, including many Veeries, which arrived on April 22.

The number of different warbler species probably peaked around April 22 which most individual birders reporting between 20 and 25 species. Interestingly, Blackpool Warblers were more numerous at the Willows at Sea Rim than at Sabine Woods. Not so surprisingly, in the of the dry conditions at Sabine Woods, Yellow Warblers were scarce at Sabine Woods, but less so at The Willows. Although they tended to be somewhat elusive, the number of Golden-winged Warblers reported was encouraging. Swainson's Warblers were seen daily between April 14 and 16. No credible reports of Black-throated Blue Warblers have been received from our area yet, although they have been seen in High Island. Apparently, no Cape May Warblers have been seen yet. Vireo numbers were perhaps best characterized as normal, but with a number of reports of early Warbling Vireos, and relatively few sightings of Philadelphia Vireos.

Indigo Buntings are present in normal numbers, and Painted Buntings have, as usual, been seen briefly on many occasions. Between Sabine Woods and The Willows, about 10 males were seen on April 16.

Yellow-billed Cuckoos were perhaps a little late, while both Summer and Scarlet Tanager were on schedule. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were particularly numerous from the middle of the month onwards. Orioles came through pretty much as normal. Flycatchers are never as numerous in the spring as they are in the fall, but good numbers of Eastern Wood-Pewees and *Empidonax* species were evident in late April, Great Crested Flycatchers on the other hand were very scarce, and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers seemed to be late in arriving in any numbers.

As usual, we hope to publish a more thorough analysis of Spring migration in a future issue of the *Brown Pelican*.

## Field Trip to Sea Rim and Sabine Woods April 22, 2000

More than twenty birders turned out bright and early for the Golden Triangle Audubon Society/Sea Rim State Park Bird Walk. The group met at the Park Headquarters where nesting Barn Swallows swooped all around (and through) the parking lot and Headquarters building. Laughing Gulls also flew overhead and Killdeer were evident in the parking lot.

After waiting for the last of the arriving birders and allowing for restroom stops, the group set off walking toward the patch of trees along Highway 87 known to local birders as "The Willows." Keeping such a large group together is difficult and often does not allow everyone to see every bird, so after a few minutes walking, several smaller groups formed around experienced birders. A number of birds were seen on the way to The Willows, including Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak and Yellow Warbler, all of which proved fairly numerous on the day. A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was seen flying by while Ruby-throated Hummingbirds worked the roadside Morning Glory flowers.

Arriving at the boardwalk, it was quickly noticed how dry the area was. Normally, standing water is present around the many small trees but none was evident on this day. The effects of the continuing drought would be seen throughout the day. Birds were easily seen upon arrival at our destination. Orchard Orioles in various plumages were numerous and comparisons were made of male, female and immature birds. A normally shy Marsh Wren popped into view for many with no coaxing, while Tree Swallows flew overhead. Eastern Kingbirds were obvious and a group of Great Blue Herons lumbered above. A White-tailed Kite made an unsuccessful dive at some hidden prey.

But the day's primary objectives were migrant songbirds, especially Warblers! Luckily, the trip fell on one of the best Warbler days of the Spring (so far). Throughout the Willows and the other small groups of trees bordering the beach road that the group would explore, the birds were plentiful. Numerous Yellow Warblers were found. Some birders were fortunate in seeing a Golden-winged Warbler while most got a look at a Blackpoll Warbler or two. Blue-winged Warbler was seen by some in the same area as a Philadelphia Vireo. A puzzling bird resolved itself into a female Cerulean Warbler while two birders found their first Bay-breasted Warbler of the Spring. Beautiful Chestnut-sided Warblers, active Common Yellowthroats and several Magnolia Warblers were among the sixteen (or more) Warbler species recorded among the Willows, Salt Cedars, and Mulberry trees that day.

Other birds found along the highway included Yellow-billed Cuckoo, White-winged Dove, Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager, and Baltimore Oriole.

But the birding did not end there! Most of the group continued on to Sabine Woods, one of the best migrant traps

on the Gulf Coast (or anywhere else for that matter). At this point, the group split up into pairs and trios to better explore the wooded area. Since this is the case, every group saw a slightly different mix of birds but everybody saw many! Hordes of Gray Catbirds roamed the woods and seemed to be in every tree and on each patch of open ground. A dozen or more could be seen in a single binocular view! Thrushes were also very common with Swainson's, Gray-cheeked, Wood Thrush and lots of Veeries recorded. Vireos were present including White-eyed, Red-eyed and a well seen Yellow-throated Vireo. Other birds seen at the woods included Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Brown Thrasher, spectacular Painted Buntings (a life-bird for some participants), Great Crested Flycatcher, Acadian Flycatcher and Eastern Wood-Pewee. Northern Bobwhite, Common Nighthawk, and Dickcissel were all heard by many but seen by few (if any). A perched Chuck-will's-widow was seen through the scope of an accommodating birder.

Warblers were also common at Sabine Woods. Most of the same species seen earlier in the day were found again with a few added for good measure. Tennessee Warblers were plentiful while a single female may have been the only Northern Parula seen. Kentucky Warblers, Hooded Warblers, and Ovenbirds were all easy but repeated searches for the elusive Swainson's Warbler went unrewarded. American Redstart, Black-and-White Warbler, and Yellow-breasted Chat were located among the trees but many birds were found coming to bathe at the small (birder provided) water holes in the dry ponds. Worm-eating Warbler and a stunning male Cerulean Warbler were among the numerous species seen at the water baths.

Late in the day, a few birders made a return trip to the Willows to look for recently arrived birds. Many of the morning's birds were still around to be enjoyed but new species located included Blackburnian Warbler and a Waterthrush that gave too quick a look for sure identification.

Although more birding was still done on that day, most had called it quits by then. By the end of the day, more than twenty warbler species were seen by several birders, providing one of the best birding trips anyone could remember. Spring on the upper Texas coast: it doesn't get much better than this!

The following species were recorded by the trip leaders:  
Brown Pelican; Neotropic Cormorant; Great Blue Heron; Great Egret; Snowy Egret; Tricolored Heron; Cattle Egret; Green Heron; Black-crowned Night-Heron; Yellow-crowned Night-Heron; Plegadis species Ibis; Roseate Spoonbill; Black Vulture; Turkey Vulture; Blue-winged Teal; White-tailed Kite; Northern Bobwhite; Sora; Purple Gallinule; Killdeer; Black-necked Stilt; Willet; Laughing Gull; Least Tern; Rock

Dove; White-winged Dove; Mourning Dove; Yellow-billed Cuckoo; Common Nighthawk; Chuck-will's-widow; Chimney Swift; Ruby-throated Hummingbird; Hummingbird species; Belted Kingfisher; Downy Woodpecker; Eastern Wood-Pewee; Acadian Flycatcher; Traill's Flycatcher; Empidonax species; Great Crested Flycatcher; Eastern Kingbird; Scissor-tailed Flycatcher; Loggerhead Shrike; White-eyed Vireo; Yellow-throated Vireo; Philadelphia Vireo; Red-eyed Vireo; Blue Jay; Crow species; Purple Martin; Tree Swallow; Northern Rough-winged Swallow; Cliff Swallow; Cave Swallow; Barn Swallow; Marsh Wren; Veery; Gray-cheeked Thrush; Swainson's Thrush; Wood Thrush; American Robin; Gray Catbird; Northern Mockingbird; Brown Thrasher; European Starling; Blue-winged Warbler; Golden-winged Warbler; Tennessee Warbler; Northern Parula; Yellow Warbler; Chestnut-sided Warbler; Magnolia Warbler; Black-throated Green Warbler; Blackburnian Warbler; Palm Warbler; Bay-breasted Warbler; Blackpoll Warbler; Cerulean Warbler; Black-and-white Warbler; American Redstart; Prothonotary Warbler; Worm-eating Warbler; Ovenbird; Northern Waterthrush; Louisiana Waterthrush; Kentucky Warbler; Common Yellowthroat; Hooded Warbler; Yellow-breasted Chat; Summer Tanager; Scarlet Tanager; Chipping Sparrow; Lincoln's Sparrow; White-throated Sparrow; Northern Cardinal; Rose-breasted Grosbeak; Blue Grosbeak; Indigo Bunting; Painted Bunting; Dickcissel; Red-winged Blackbird; Common Grackle; Boat-tailed Grackle; Great-tailed Grackle; Brown-headed Cowbird; Orchard Oriole; Baltimore Oriole; House Sparrow; 107 species.

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## April Meeting Report (continued from p.1)

them for nest sites: the European Starling and House Sparrow. It is best not to permit these nonnative competitors to nest anywhere on your property, as they will peck and destroy eggs and nestlings of martins, bluebirds, tree swallows and other birds. If permitted, some native birds including bluebirds and tree swallows will claim and defend an entire martin house. The solution is to keep martin housing closed until the arrival of subadult martins and to provide alternate housing for native species. Other possibly predators include the black rat snake and squirrels.

Before colonization of America, Native Americans first attracted martins to gourds. Today, eastern martins are almost entirely dependent on supplied nest cavities in the form of houses and gourds. Western subspecies still use cavities in cactus in Arizona and woodpecker cavities in trees on the west coast and mountains. Purple Martins are beginning to use gourds and single wooden boxes in Oregon, Washington and southernmost British Columbia. Martin houses come in all shapes and sizes, but be practical and purchase a house that is easy to manage.

I found the information about the green leaves and the discarding of the egg hemispheres very interesting. It is believed that the adults will bring in green leaves and place them in the bowl of the nest right before the female lays the eggs. The theory is that the eggs get moisture from the green leaves and they also feel that there is something emitted by the leaves that may help hinder parasites such as mites. Secondly, if the egg hemispheres were not discarded by the adults, the hemispheres could attach themselves to an unhatched egg and insulate it from the mother's warmth, which could cause the egg not to hatch. To prevent egg capping from happening, be sure to discard these hemispheres if you find any during a nest check.

According to Jace, the main reason he became involved with managing Purple Martins was because he has been interested in nature since childhood. He has always loved bird watching and when he first became aware of these birds he thought what a better way to study bird life. Just think about it: you can become very intimate with these birds, you can see them become attracted to the colony, you can see them build their nest and the materials they use in the nest, you can see them lay their eggs, you can see their young hatch, you can see the young develop, you can see them fledge and fly, and you can see them return to the house year after year. What better thing could you ask from a bird? However, managing your colony is most important because if you don't the nonnative species will take over and the martins will eventually abandon the colony. Thank you, Jace, for the handouts and sharing with us your knowledge and personal experiences. In my opinion, your speaking debut was a tremendous success. Our next membership meeting will be Thursday, May 18, 2000. See you there!

*Nancy Fisher*

## Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank Mary Alyce Wright for January; Pat Jeane and Lu Skillern for February; and Bob Collier, Jean Hollingsworth, Ann Nobles, Lynn Otto, and Needa Reed for March. John Haynes and Steve Mayes provided the refreshments in April; and Andrea Billingsley and Marcelean Howell have volunteered for May; Sue Flanagan and Anne Lewing for August; and Jack Baugh and Joe Tibbs for September. Additional volunteers will be welcome especially for October and beyond.



# NATIONAL AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

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# RARE BIRD ALERTS

Below is a listing of Rare Bird Alert telephone numbers for nearby areas. Transcriptions of some current tapes are available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.stat.wharton.upenn.edu/~siler/hoturls.html>

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
San Antonio	(210) 308-6788
Waco	(254) 299-8170
Louisiana	(504) 768-9874

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