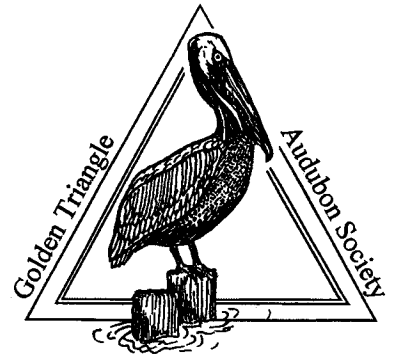


Brown Pelican

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The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 8 No. 4

April 2002

**Membership Meeting
Thursday, April 18, 2002
6:30 PM, Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont
McFaddin and Texas Point National Wildlife Refuges
Patrick Walther**

Patrick Walther has been the biologist at Texas Point and McFaddin National Wildlife Refuges for about seven years now. In his presentation, he will talk about some of the marsh management techniques used on the Refuges, and also about the goals of the Comprehensive Conservation Planning process currently under way.

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.

March Membership Meeting

At the March meeting, Charles Post presented a very informative program on Bluebirds entitled "On the Road to Recovery". Because of the efforts of many people putting up bluebird boxes and maintaining bluebird trails, it appears that the bluebird is making a comeback. There are three species of bluebirds that live in North America: Eastern, Western and Mountain. Field guides show the differences in the three species and their ranges if you are not familiar with them. Bluebirds are secondary cavity nesters, making their nests in old woodpecker holes, holes in old dead trees and manmade nest boxes. Charles has maintained a Bluebird trail since 1989, monitoring 50 to 60 boxes in and around Liberty. Charles provided very good information concerning bluebird history, habitat, mating, eating, nesting, pests and predators, banding and monitoring boxes. Bluebird boxes are not only just for bluebirds but several other welcomed birds could use the boxes. These include tree swallows, chickadees, titmouse, wrens, White-breasted Nuthatches, and flycatchers. Besides providing bluebird boxes, you might attract bluebirds to your yard by providing water.

Also at the March meeting, Barbara Tilton, President of the Friends of Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge gave a slide presentation on one of the newest invasive aquatic plants, the Giant Salvinia. This species unfortunately had completely choked one lake in the Refuge, and is in danger of spreading. The slides showed some of the problems caused by the plant, and provided information on how to identify it. Barbara urged everyone to be on the lookout for the species and to help educate boaters in particular as to the dangers of spreading this and other invasive aquatic plants, such as water hyacinth.

The slide show and accompanying display were made possible through a grant from the Galveston Bay Estuary Program, and underwritten (in part) by the State of Texas through the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The Brown Pelican

Vol. 8, No.4 April 2002

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.

March 30 to April 27 -- Yellow Rail Walks at Anahuac NWR.

April 6 Sat. 7 a.m.; April 7 Sun. 4 p.m.; April 13 Sat. 4 p.m.; April 14 Sun. 7 a.m.; April 15 Mon. 7 a.m.; April 20 Sat. 7 a.m.; April 27 Sat. 7 a.m.

Meet leader David Sarkozi of the Friends of Anahuac Refuge at the visitor contact station at the entrance to the Refuge at the time indicated.

The Yellow Rail walks are in strenuous walking conditions. The ground will be wet, but not what you could consider wading. Waterproof footwear is recommended; rubber knee boots are good. The water will be just "splashy" and we avoid areas where water would cover the feet so waterproof hiking boots would be fine. No one will be allowed on the walk with open toe shoes, sandals, or barefoot.

While the walking is tough, folks as old as 75 years of age have participated. Those who wish can stand at the edge of prairie and usually get a pretty good look at a Yellow Rail, often seeing rails those in the Prairie don't!. We have seen Yellow Rails are seen on about 80% of the walks.

There are LOTS of mosquitoes on the Yellow Rail Prairie; long sleeves are recommended, as is insect repellent. The chance of a fall in the mud is good. Wear clothes you don't mind getting dirty and wet.

Thursday April 18, 2002 -- Membership Meeting. See front page for details.

Saturday April 20, 2002 -- Field Trip. Our traditional April Field Trip in conjunction with Sea Rim State Park looking for Spring migrants at "the Willows" and later at Sabine Woods starts at 7:30 a.m. at the headquarters building at Sea Rim State Park. The

Sea Rim portion is easy walking along the roadside and some birds can usually even be seen from a vehicle. Sabine Woods is also mostly easy walking on the elevated boardwalk. Leaders Steve Mayes and John Whittle.

April 25 through 28 -- Kountze Birding Festival.

Birding in the Big Thicket, a birding celebration, will be held at Kountze Middle School April 25-28. There will be workshops on Beginning Birding, Nature Photography, Birding on the Net and other topics. Nancy Newfield will be presenting her outstanding program on Hummingbirds on Saturday April 27, and several of our members will be presenting workshops. Tours will be offered to surrounding areas and are various prices. On Saturday, children's workshops will be offered with hands-on projects and informational subjects, \$1.00 for each or \$5.00 for all. Tours will be during the day on Friday. Tours include a tour to Anahuac Wildlife Refuge and High Island OR a tour to Steinhagen Lake and Toledo Bend with a stop at the new Big Thicket Visitors Center. Also, there will be an Owls Tour on Friday night. Adult individual workshops will be \$2.00 each or an all-speaker program pass for \$15.00. Golden Triangle Audubon Society will have a booth at the Exposition to be held on Saturday April 27. For more information contact the Kountze Chamber of Commerce, 835 Redwood, Kountze, Texas 77625 or call 409-246-3413 or 1-866-456-8689 or email allums@ruralcomm.com.

Friday and Saturday April 26 and 27 -- Texas Parks and Wildlife Coastal Expos. See the details on p. 3.

Sunday April 28 -- Great Texas Birding Classic Awards Brunch.

The 2002 Great Texas Birding Classic will conclude with an awards brunch to be held at the Holiday Inn Park Central in Port Arthur at 10:30 a.m. Tickets are \$10 each and can be reserved by calling Shelly Scroggs, Tournament Coordinator at 1-888-892-4737 ext. 3. For additional questions, you may call the Port Arthur Convention and Visitors Bureau at 409-985-7822 or 1-800-235-7822.

Saturday May 11, 2002 – Jefferson County Migration Count.

Our annual Spring migration count. Contact John Whittle (409-722-4193 or whittleja@hal.lamar.edu) to offer to help. In May, the first three or four hours after dawn are the most important and we will welcome your participation for even a few hours. We may also conduct a count in Orange County.

Thursday May 18, 2002 – Membership Meeting. For this meeting, Chester Moore will give us a brief report on his participation in the search of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Also, you are invited to bring your favorite recent slides or video.

Early June 2002 – possible Field Trip to Hardin County. If there is interest, we plan to run a field trip to Hardin County to look for the nesting species of the area – Hooded, Pine, Prairie and Swainson's Warbler, Indigo and Painted Bunting, Gray Catbird, Summer Tanager, Acadian Flycatcher, Brown-headed Nuthatch and others. June 8 is a possible date.

For those interested in Bachman's Sparrow, we would recommend a trip to Boykin Springs sometime in May, as the species has become hard to find in Hardin County. Boykins Springs is site 007 on the UTC Birding Trail. For details see <http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/birdingtrails/upper/welcome.htm>

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank John Haynes and Steve Mayes providing the refreshments in March. Kathi Orgeron and Margaret Johnson have volunteered for April, and Jack Baugh and Joe Tibbs for May. Volunteers are now solicited for August and onwards. We do not expect one person to bring everything, but please call so we can coordinate! If you can just bring drinks and cookies or something similar, please call Jana Whittle at (409) 722-4193 as soon as possible. Please help if you can!

Subscription Renewal Reminder

Please check the mailing label on this issue. If the date on your label NOT prefixed by AU has passed, please remit your contribution of \$15 to Golden Triangle Audubon Society at P.O. Box 1292, Nederland, Texas 77627-1292. Although this contribution towards the cost of the *Brown Pelican* is voluntary for National Audubon Society members living in the official chapter territory, we will appreciate your support. Our official chapter territory is defined by zip codes, but is basically Jefferson, Hardin and Orange Counties and one or two localities close to those Counties.

Banded Brown Pelicans

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is asking anyone seeing a banded Brown Pelican to report the sighting.

Beginning in 2000, considerable numbers of juvenile Brown Pelicans have been banded on the Chandeleur Island off the Louisiana and Mississippi coasts. In 2000, 700 birds were banded. An additional 1,500 juveniles were banded in 2001, and plans are to band another 1,500 in 2002.

The birds are banded with an aluminum U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service band on the left leg and a color marker with an alpha-numeric code on the right leg. Color markers are approximately one inch in height and vary in color depending on the year in which they were banded. In 2000, color markers were red with white lettering, and in 2001, color markers were yellow with black lettering. Color markers for 2002 will be green with white lettering.

Reporting all sightings will help biologists with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determine dispersal pattern and nest site fidelity of Brown Pelicans. This project is important in gaining life history knowledge of Brown Pelicans and may be valuable in the delisting process in respect of the endangered species status.

Please do not attempt to catch or harass Pelicans in order to read bands as these activities are illegal.

Please report sightings to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Attn: Nancy Walters, 1010 Gause Blvd, Bldg. 936, Slidell, LA 70458; tel 985-646-7555 or to the editor for forwarding.

Coastal Expos

Texas Parks and Wildlife is seeking volunteers to assist with the Coastal Expos to be held at Sea Rim State Park on Friday April 26, and at the Neches River Festival in Beaumont on Saturday April 27.

No experience is necessary, as training will be provided. All volunteers will receive a free T-shirt. The Expos are designed to educate the children and adults of Texas about coastal and water issues in Texas. A wide variety of hands-on activities are scheduled.

To volunteer, contact Jennifer Bronson at Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Coastal Conservation Brnach, 3000 South IH-35, Suite 320, Austin, Texas 78704. Tel: 512-912-7033; fax 512-707-1358, email jennifer.bronson@tpwd.state.tx.us

Articles Needed!

As you look through this issue of the *Brown Pelican*, you will probably realize that the editor has not only edited this issue, but has written much of it. We would particularly welcome contributed articles on any birding or bird habitat related conservation topic to better balance the content of each issue.

Sabine Woods Work Day

We had a very productive work day at the woods on March 9. The main trails were all mowed, and new signage and a donation box were installed. As always there are a number of tasks not inside the main woods that need to be accomplished during April and May. Contact John Whittle if you can help. We thank those who have already worked on the woods this year: Jack Baugh, Bob Davis, Howard Davis, John Haynes, Robert Hurt, Steve Mayes, Art MacKinnon, Joe Tibbs and Jana Whittle.

Field Trip to Bolivar Flats – 23 March 2002

The annual Golden Triangle Audubon Society field trip to Bolivar Flats is much anticipated by its participants because more species are generally seen on this trip than any other trip of the year. The popularity of the trip was easy to see when almost 20 birders showed up at the vehicle barrier. The tide was well in meaning that the birds were crowded together and not much walking would be required to reach them.

Birds were obvious from the start of the trip with Sanderlings and Willets being among the first seen. Moving down the beach, a Horned Lark was quickly located and seen by all. Dunlin were present in good numbers though still in clothed in their drab winter plumages. Large rafts of ducks were seen in the surf, with Lesser Scaup by far the most common though Red-breasted Mergansers also made a good showing. Least and Western Sandpipers were identified along with a Ruddy Turnstone (a much easier ID). After a bit of scope work, Red Knots began to appear among the flocks of shorebirds. One Knot also showed a trace of the "red" plumage (on its belly) that the species is named for.

Plovers always put on a great show at Bolivar Flats. Black-bellied Plovers were easy to spot but the smaller plovers require a closer look. Snowy Plovers were easy to find, popping up in every scope view. Two Wilson's Plovers were spotted among piles of washed up seaweed. Piping Plovers started appearing in droves a little further down the beach. Semipalmated Plovers were eventually found providing a clean sweep of the small Plovers. Killdeer would also be seen on the day, but Golden-Plovers remained elusive.

Gulls and Terns were also easily found, congregating in several large groups on the Flats and wheeling overhead. All of the usual gulls, including Laughing, Ring-billed, Herring and Bonaparte's Gulls were located without much trouble. A couple of Gull-billed Terns were quickly seen. Large Royal and Caspian Terns were easily found and a few Sandwich Terns, with their pale-tipped bills, were eventually picked out. Close comparison was made between Forster's Terns and a Common Tern sitting on the beach. A flyby Least Tern was also enjoyed by the birders. A Black Tern would turn up later in the day, meaning the group also swept all of the normally available Terns. Black Skimmers were seen on the Flats but were more numerous later at Rollover Pass.

A number of other birds were also enjoyed by the group. Large numbers of Marbled Godwits and Long-billed Curlews probed the mud flats. Dowitchers did their sewing machine feeding motion in shallow waters. Both Yellowlegs species were located. As always, both Brown and American White Pelicans loafed on the beach in good numbers. One American Oystercatcher was located in the flocks while American Avocets were much easier to find with thousands of the birds, many nearing full breeding plumage, on the beach and in the surf. Reddish Egrets displayed their odd, drunken feeding behavior. Raptors also made their presence known on the Flats with both a Northern Harrier and a Peregrine Falcon coming by to harass the masses of shorebirds. On the marsh edge of Bolivar Flats other species were located. Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows gave good looks along with more common Savannah Sparrows. Eastern Meadowlarks were seen along with a flyby Whimbrel spotted by a sharp-eyed observer.

The group left Bolivar Flats having seen nearly every bird that could be reasonably expected there. It would be hard to imagine a better day on the Flats but the day was not over. Other birds awaited at other locations on the Bolivar Peninsula. At Fort Travis Park, Sora and a flock of Fulvous Whistling-Ducks were added to the day's list. On Bob's Road, Belted Kingfisher and several duck species including Gadwall were found. On Yacht Basin Road, species seen included several Whimbrels, Spotted Sandpiper and a nice, male Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Rollover Pass also gave a good showing with Black-necked Stilts and close-up Marbled Godwits.

Leaving the great birding of the Bolivar shores might be a sad thing unless a birder stops by High Island on the way home. Boy Scout Woods was first in line and gave up some good birds right away. A small flock of Inca Doves in the parking lot briefly

concealed a Common Ground-Dove in their midst but it was soon revealed to the remaining birders. The woods themselves were pretty quiet. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were heard and seen and an indignant Carolina Wren scolded the group from a thicket. A Blue-headed Vireo moved among the trees while Cardinals called from the underbrush. A stop at Prothonotary Pond lived up to its name. After some time spent observing only Blue Jays and a Yellow-rumped Warbler, a beautiful Prothonotary Warbler appeared among the emergent vegetation of the pond.

The last stop of the day, as has become the tradition of this trip, was the rookery at the Smith Oaks Sanctuary. Already in full swing, the birds put on a fine show for the group. Roseate Spoonbills nesting next to Great Egret next to Snowy Egrets next to Tricolored Herons – it is almost too much to take in. Mix in Neotropical Cormorants, Anhingas, and White Ibis and the scene becomes even more awe-inspiring. But the show was not over, Little Blue Herons dotted the far shore and Black-crowned Night Herons were seen among the trees. Black and Turkey Vultures kept careful watch from perches as a White-tailed Kite hovered in the distance. Common Moorhen worked among the plants of Clay Bottom Pond while a Pied-billed Grebe dove for its dinner. The day ended as it had begun, with a group of birders, a mass of spectacular birds, and an eagerness for another trip to Bolivar.

List of species seen: GREBE, Pied-billed (11); PELICAN, American White (282); PELICAN, Brown (155); CORMORANT, Neotropical (114); CORMORANT, Double-crested (72); ANHINGA (8); HERON, Great Blue (6); EGRET, Great (108); EGRET, Snowy (30); HERON, Little Blue (28); HERON, Tricolored (39); EGRET, Reddish (3); EGRET, Cattle (69); NIGHT-HERON, Black-crowned (10); NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crowned (6); IBIS, White (6); IBIS, *Plegadis* (115); SPOONBILL, Roseate (101); VULTURE, Black (1); VULTURE, Turkey (9); WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous (20); GADWALL (12); DUCK, Mottled (1); TEAL, Blue-winged (25); SCAUP, Lesser (535); MERGANSER, Red-breasted (20); KITE, White-tailed (3); HARRIER, Northern (2); HAWK, Red-tailed (8); KESTREL, American (8); FALCON, Peregrine (1); SORA (1); MOORHEN, Common (2); COOT, American (100); PLOVER, Black-bellied (52); PLOVER, Snowy (15); PLOVER, Wilson's (20); PLOVER, Semipalmated (10); PLOVER, Piping (100); KILLDEER (2); OYSTERCATCHER, American (1); STILT, Black-necked (2); AVOCET, American (3000); YELLOWLEGS, Greater (4); YELLOWLEGS, Lesser (21); WILLET (86); SANDPIPER, Spotted (1); WHIMBREL (3); CURLEW, Long-billed (30); GODWIT, Marbled (125); TURNSTONE, Ruddy (10); KNOT, Red (15); SANDLERLING (500); SANDPIPER, Western (250); SANDPIPER, Least (20); DUNLIN (220); DOWITCHER, Short-billed (70); SNIPE, Com. (1); GULL, Laughing (155); GULL, Bonaparte's (3); GULL, Ring-billed (55); GULL, Herring (5); TERN, Gull-billed (3); TERN, Caspian (6); TERN, Royal (106); TERN, Sandwich (20); TERN, Common (1); TERN, Forster's (174); TERN, Least (2); TERN, Black (2); SKIMMER, Black (202); DOVE, Rock (23); COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian (4); DOVE, White-winged (1); DOVE, Mourning (13); DOVE, Inca (3); GROUND-DOVE, Com. (1); HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-throated (1); KINGFISHER, Belted (4); SHRIKE, Loggerhead (8); VIREO, Blue-headed (1); JAY, Blue (5); LARK, Horned (1); MARTIN, Purple (13); SWALLOW, Tree (2); SWALLOW, N. Rough-winged (1); SWALLOW, Barn (16); WREN, Carolina (2); KINGLET, Ruby-crowned (1); GNAT-CATCHER, Blue-gray (5); ROBIN, American (10); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (18); THRASHER, Brown (1); STARLING, European (51); WARBLER, Orange-crowned (1); WARBLER, Yellow-rumped (4); WARBLER, Prothonotary (1); YELLOW-THROAT, Com. (2); SPARROW, Savannah (14); SPARROW, Nelson's Sharp-tailed (2); SPARROW, Seaside (2); SPARROW, Lincoln's (1); SPARROW, Swamp (2); CARDINAL, Northern (7); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (18); MEADOWLARK, Eastern (9); GRACKLE, Com. (7); GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (26); GRACKLE, Great-tailed (24); SPARROW, House (12); Total species 109.

Migration for the Casual Bird Watcher

If you have been reading this Newsletter for a while, you probably have realized that birders in this area look forward to "migration" season year. And probably you have noticed that spring migration attracts more attention than fall migration. You have probably even noticed that the local convention and visitors bureaus and chambers of commerce actually promote the area as a great place to come and bird the migration. This article will attempt to give you some of the basics, so that you too can pick the right time and place to watch birds.

Most attention is focussed on what are known as "neotropical migrants." These are birds, mostly passerine (or perching) birds that spend the winter in the tropics, anywhere from Mexico to Argentina and Chile and pass through this area in spring and fall on their way to and from their breeding grounds, which, depending on the species involved, can range from just north of the coastal plain in Texas to the tundra of northern Canada. Many species of shorebird also migrate in a similar fashion, mostly to the tundra belt along Canada and the north slope of Alaska. Most hawk species are also migratory. Of course, there are birds for which the Texas coastal plain is home for the winter (waterfowl and sparrows are the most important) – they leave us in spring to go north to nest – and there are still other species (Purple Martins and swallows are perhaps the best known, but there are others) that winter south of us and come here to breed.

To understand why the Texas coast is such a favorable place to watch spring migration, it is necessary to understand a little of the geography involved. To a bird coming from South America and heading for the central or eastern parts of North America, after travelling through Panama, there are two choices. One is to proceed to the Yucatan Peninsula, and then across the Gulf of Mexico to the Texas or Louisiana coast – trans-Gulf migration. The other is to proceed along the Gulf coast of Mexico and proceed through the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the Texas Gulf coast – circum-Gulf Migration. (There are some species that migrate from or through the West Indies and enter the United States in Florida, but these are not of concern to us here.) Bird migration routes are genetically programmed – most birds do not need parental instruction

Surprisingly perhaps, most of the neotropical migrants are trans-Gulf migrants. This means that they must undertake a 650-mile non-stop flight across the Gulf of Mexico. In a "no-wind" condition, at a typical flight speed of 30 mph, they will take 21 hours. Non-stop flight for 21 hours will exhaust all the fat reserves that the bird built up in advance of the flight. A neo-tropical migrant reaching the coast will be completely exhausted and may well head for the nearest patch of habitat that will provide it with shelter and an opportunity to find food. In spring, the prevailing winds across the Gulf are from the south, favoring the migration by effectively increasing the bird's "ground speed" (speed over the ground, or sea in this case) thus reducing the time taken to cross the Gulf. However, cold fronts frequently advance south into the Gulf in spring. Winds behind such fronts are from the north, seriously reducing the bird's ground speed and increasing the time to cross the Gulf. If a neotropical migrant encounters a front before or as it reaches the coast, it will certainly drop into the first trees or group of bushes that it sees. The Texas Gulf coast

is mainly flat and marshy. Birds therefore have a hard time finding suitable habitat, and will concentrate in the few isolated woods that there are. In our area, Sabine Woods, 4 miles west of Sabine Pass is one such "migrant trap." The use of the word "trap" is perhaps unfortunate, as the birds are in no way restrained from leaving other than by a need to rest. The relatively small area of these woodlots concentrates the birds, sometimes producing "fall-outs" where every tree and bush is full of birds. Even the line of Salt Cedars near the Pilot Station in Sabine Pass, and the small group of willows just west of Sea Rim State Park can be full of birds at times. Other migrant traps nearby include Peveto Beach Woods east of Johnson Bayou in Cameron Parish, Louisiana and the woods at High Island in Galveston County.

Predicting fall-outs is not easy. The frontal activity that produces fall out conditions is fairly well understood and can be predicted days, in advance, even if not the precise timing. The timing is critical. Most neo-tropical species migrate at night. They leave the Yucatan an hour or so after sundown or about 7 p.m. (standard time). They will thus arrive on the coast a few hours either side of 4 p.m., depending on the wind direction and speed over the Gulf. Birds in general do not like to fly through rain or the turbulent conditions associated with strong winds, even if the wind direction is favorable. The prevailing conditions will dictate whether the birds move on the next night or stay over awaiting better weather. A few birds will almost always stay, so the woods are rarely completely devoid of birds during the migration season. However, in good weather with south winds, most migrants probably do not even stop along the coast but continue to the woods 30 to 50 miles inland, where they spread out in the much greater area, and are much less obvious. Sometimes a frontal passage at the right time of day fails to produce significant number of birds in the woodlots. The explanation is probably quite simple. Migrants will not leave the Yucatan if the weather conditions there are not favorable. A front off the Gulf coast of the Yucatan is probably enough to prevent the birds from leaving, and the birds may concentrate as the birds migrating a few days later catch up with those already there. However good the birds are at sensing weather conditions, it is unlikely that they have any inkling of the weather on the Texas coast when they are in the Yucatan. Most likely, the largest number of migrants are seen on the Texas coast when two factor coincide. A large number of birds on the Yucatan coast (concentrated as a result of the prior days' weather there) leaves one night only to encounter a front offshore or just onshore at the Texas coast.

Spring migration runs, very roughly from late March to mid to late May, with the peak numbers in the last few days of April. Fall migration, on the other hand, is more spread out, running from mid August to late October. In addition, concentrations on the coast are not as common, although they do occur when birds reach the coast and await more favorable weather – north winds being desired. Also, many species are already in their winter plumage, often much less colorful than their spring (breeding) plumage. Time of day is not as important, although the birds follow their usual habits and are most active in the first few hours after dawn.

Bird Sightings – February 2002

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: Our observers were not very active during February, discouraged perhaps by the paucity of wintering species, especially sparrows this winter. Interesting species included a Vermilion Flycatcher along Highway 87 near Sabine Woods, and continued sightings in Sabine Woods of both Groove-billed Ani and a beautifully plumaged male Spotted Towhee. Good numbers of Stilt Sandpiper wintered in Cattail Marsh and there have been wintering hummingbirds most of which are only reported to us when they first arrive.

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---|
| GREBE, Pied-billed | JEF 5 reps(18) | HARRIER, Northern | JEF 3 reps(8) |
| PELICAN, Amer. White | JEF 2 reps(23) | HAWK, Sharp-shinned | JEF 2/16(1) MW |
| PELICAN, Brown | JEF 2/3(2) JAW; JEF-PI 2/3(1) JAW; JEF 2/17(1) MW; JEF-PI 2/17(3) MW; JEF-TX87 2/17(1) MW; JEF-TXPT 2/17(7) MW | HAWK, Red-shouldered | HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 4 reps(5) |
| CORMORANT, Neotropic | JEF-TP 2/2(1) JAW; JEF 2/3(5) JAW; JEF-PI 2/3(1) JAW; JEF 2/17(1) MW; JEF-PI 2/17(7) MW; JEF-TX87 2/17(5) MW; JEF-TXPT 2/17(1) MW; JEF-TP 2/24(2) JAW | HAWK, Red-tailed | JEF 5 reps(24); ORA 1 rep(1) |
| CORMORANT, Double-crested | JEF 5 reps(66) | KESTREL, American | JEF 4 reps(25) |
| CORMORANT, Species | JEF 2 reps(21); ORA 1 rep(10) | MERLIN | JEF-SW 2/8(1) AM; JEF-SW 2/17(1) |
| ANHINGA | JEF-TP 2/2(1) JAW; JEF-TP 2/16(1) MW | MW | |
| HERON, Great Blue | JEF 5 reps(22); ORA 1 rep(1) | MOORHEN, Common | JEF 1 rep(1) |
| EGRET, Great | JEF 4 reps(50); ORA 1 rep(1); TYL 1 rep(2) | COOT, American | JEF 4 reps(1251) |
| EGRET, Snowy | JEF 4 reps(42); ORA 1 rep(2) | CRANE, Sandhill | JEF-TP 2/2(34) JAW |
| EGRET, Cattle | JEF 1 rep(10) | PLOVER, Black-bellied | JEF 2 reps(4) |
| IBIS, White | JEF 2/2(30) JAW; JEF-TP 2/2(1) JAW; JEF 2/16(5) MW; ORA 2/3(33) KS; ORA 2/17(2) KS | KILLDEER | JEF 5 reps(1169); ORA 1 rep(1) |
| IBIS, Glossy | JEF-TP 2/2(1) JAW; JEF-TP 2/16(1) MW | STILT, Black-necked | JEF 5 reps(272) |
| IBIS, White-faced | JEF-TP 2/2(3) JAW; JEF-TP 2/16(5) MW | AVOCET, American | JEF 2 reps(75) |
| IBIS, Plegadis | JEF 2/2(2) JAW; JEF-TP 2/2(50) JAW; JEF 2/16(22) MW; JEF-TP 2/16(20) MW; JEF-SW 2/17(5) MW; JEF-TP 2/24(10) JAW | YELLOWLEGS, Greater | JEF 3 reps(78) |
| SPOONBILL, Roseate | JEF 2/2(10) JAW | YELLOWLEGS, Lesser | JEF 3 reps(96) |
| VULTURE, Black | HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 3 reps(44) | WILLET | JEF 1 rep(3) |
| VULTURE, Turkey | HAI 2 reps(18); JEF 4 reps(23); TYL 1 rep(2) | SANDPIPER, Spotted | JEF-PI 2/17(1) MW |
| GOOSE, Snow | JEF 1 rep(50) | CURLEW, Long-billed | JEF 1 rep(6) |
| GOOSE, Ross's | JEF-TP 2/2(2) JAW | TURNSTONE, Ruddy | JEF 1 rep(4) |
| GOOSE, Canada | JEF 1 rep(25) | SANDPIPER, Least | JEF 3 reps(245) |
| DUCK, Wood | JEF-TP 2/16(20) MW | SANDPIPER, Stilt | JEF-TP 2/2(27) JAW; JEF 2/16(1) MW; JEF-TP 2/16(14) MW; JEF-TP 2/24(2) JAW |
| GADWALL | JEF 4 reps(475) | DOWITCHER, Long-billed | JEF 3 reps(570) |
| MALLARD | JEF 2 reps(18); ORA 1 rep(6) | SNIBE, Common | JEF 3 reps(108) |
| DUCK, Mottled | JEF 2/2(2) JAW; JEF-TP 2/16(16) MW; JEF-TP 2/24(8) JAW; ORA 2/17(4) KS | GULL, Laughing | JEF 5 reps(1457); ORA 2 reps(35) |
| TEAL, Blue-winged | JEF 4 reps(675); ORA 1 rep(66) | GULL, Bonaparte's | JEF 3 reps(164); ORA 1 rep(3) |
| TEAL, Cinnamon | JEF-TP 2/2(2) JAW | GULL, Ring-billed | JEF 5 reps(714) |
| SHOVELER, Northern | JEF 5 reps(1575) | GULL, Herring | JEF 5 reps(33); ORA 1 rep(1) |
| PINTAIL, Northern | JEF 2 reps(28) | GULL, Lesser Black-backed | JEF 2/1(1) AM |
| TEAL, Green-winged | JEF 3 reps(950) | TERN, Gull-billed | JEF-TP 2/24(2) JAW |
| CANVASBACK | JEF-PI 2/3(50) JAW | TERN, Caspian | JEF 4 reps(15) |
| DUCK, Ring-necked | JEF 2 reps(26) | TERN, Forster's | JEF 4 reps(14); ORA 1 rep(4) |
| SCAUP, Greater | JEF-TP 2/2(1) JAW; JEF-TP 2/24(3) JAW | DOVE, Rock | JEF 4 reps(87); ORA 1 rep(30) |
| SCAUP, Lesser | JEF 3 reps(95) | COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian | JEF 2/16(1) MW; ORA 2/3(7) JAW |
| BUFFLEHEAD | JEF 3 reps(21) | DOVE, White-winged | JEF-NEDR 2/2(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/3(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/17(2) MW |
| DUCK, Ruddy | JEF 3 reps(95) | DOVE, Mourning | HAI 1 rep(5); JEF 5 reps(75); ORA 1 rep(1) |
| OSPREY | JEF-TP 2/2(1) JAW; JEF-TP 2/16(1) MW; JEF-TX87 2/17(2) MW | DOVE, Inca | JEF 1 rep(3) |
| KITE, White-tailed | JEF 1 rep(2) | ANI, Groove-billed | JEF-SW 2/8 (1) AM |
| | | OWL, Barn | JEF 2/23(1) MW |
| | | OWL, Great Horned | JEF-SW 2/17(1) MW |
| | | HUMMINGBIRD, Black-chin. | JEF-NEDR 2/8(1) JAW |
| | | HUMMINGBIRD, <i>Selasphorus</i> | JEF-NEDR 2/28(1) JAW |
| | | KINGFISHER, Belted | JEF 4 reps(9) |
| | | WOODPECKER, Red-bellied | HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 5 reps(7); ORA 2 reps(2); TYL 1 rep(2) |
| | | SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied | HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 1 rep(3) |
| | | WOODPECKER, Downy | HAI 2 reps(4); JEF 2 reps(6); TYL 1 rep(1) |
| | | FLICKER, Northern | HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 1 rep(2) |
| | | WOODPECKER, Pileated | HAI 2 reps(3); JEF 2 reps(3) |
| | | PHOEBE, Eastern | JEF 4 reps(15) |

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| FLYCATCHER, Vermilion | JEF-TX87 2/17(1) GD |
| SHRIKE, Loggerhead rep(3) | HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 4 reps(44); ORA 1 |
| VIREO, White-eyed JAW; JEF-TP 2/16(3) MW; | HAI-SNDY 2/10(1) KS; HAI 2/24(3) |
| VIREO, Blue-headed rep(1) | HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 3 reps(4); ORA 1 |
| JAY, Blue rep(4) | HAI 2 reps(5); JEF 6 reps(19); ORA 1 |
| CROW, American rep(3) | HAI 2 reps(19); JEF 1 rep(2); TYL 1 |
| CROW, Fish MW; JEF-TP 2/16(83) MW; | JEF-TP 2/2(15) JAW; JEF 2/16(3) |
| CROW, species | ORA 1 rep(2) |
| MARTIN, Purple | HAI 2/24(1) KS |
| SWALLOW, Tree 2/16(50) MW; ORA 2/3(33) KS | JEF-TP 2/2(200) JAW; JEF-TP |
| CHICKADEE, Carolina 1 rep(3) | HAI 2 reps(14); JEF 3 reps(11); TYL |
| TITMOUSE, Tufted rep(3) | HAI 2 reps(15); JEF 1 rep(5); TYL 1 |
| NUTHATCH, Brown-headed | HAI 2/24(1) JAW |
| WREN, Carolina reps(3) | HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 4 reps(9); ORA 2 |
| WREN, Marsh | JEF-TP 2/2(2) JAW |
| KINGLET, Golden-crowned | HAI-SNDY 2/10(1) KS |
| KINGLET, Ruby-crowned rep(1) | HAI 2 reps(6); JEF 3 reps(14); ORA 1 |
| GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray | JEF 4 reps(22); TYL 1 rep(1) |
| BLUEBIRD, Eastern rep(2) | HAI 2 reps(8); JEF 2 reps(3); ORA 1 |
| ROBIN, American 3 reps(73) | HAI 2 reps(28); JEF 8 reps(63); ORA |
| CATBIRD, Gray | HAI 2/24(1) JAW |
| MOCKINGBIRD, Northern reps(4) | HAI 1 rep(4); JEF 5 reps(24); ORA 2 |
| THRASHER, Brown | JEF 2 reps(3); ORA 1 rep(13) |
| STARLING, European | JEF 5 reps(234); ORA 1 rep(1) |
| PIPIT, American | JEF 3 reps(131) |
| WAXWING, Cedar | JEF 1 rep(20); ORA 2 reps(65) |
| WARBLER, Orange-crowned | JEF 3 reps(8) |
| WARBLER, Yellow-rumped reps(12) | HAI 1 rep(3); JEF 2 reps(37); ORA 2 |
| WARBLER, Pine rep(2); TYL 1 rep(1) | HAI 2 reps(15); JEF 3 reps(5); ORA 1 |
| WARBLER, Palm MW | JEF-TP 2/2(1) JAW; JEF-TP 2/16(2) |
| YELLOWTHROAT, Common | JEF 3 reps(5) |
| WARBLER, Wilson's | JEF-SW 2/17(1) MW |
| TOWHEE, Spotted AM; | JEF-SW 2/1(1) AM; JEF-SW 2/8(1) |
| SPARROW, Chipping | HAI 1 rep(25) |
| SPARROW, Field | JEF-TP 2/16(2) MW |
| SPARROW, Savannah | JEF 3 reps(56) |
| SPARROW, Song | JEF 3 reps(6) |
| SPARROW, Swamp | JEF 1 rep(3); ORA 1 rep(2) |
| SPARROW, White-throated reps(17); TYL 1 rep(2) | HAI 2 reps(4); JEF 2 reps(7); ORA 2 |
| SPARROW, White-crowned MW | JEF-TP 2/2(5) JAW; JEF-TP 2/16(2) |
| CARDINAL, Northern rep(3) | HAI 2 reps(6); JEF 4 reps(20); TYL 1 |
| BLACKBIRD, Red-winged | JEF 4 reps(653) |
| MEADOWLARK, Eastern | JEF 1 rep(1) |
| MEADOWLARK species | JEF 3 reps(9) |
| GRACKLE, Common | JEF 4 reps(150); ORA 1 rep(20) |
| GRACKLE, Boat-tailed | JEF 2 reps(15) |
| GRACKLE, Great-tailed | JEF 5 reps(628) |
| COWBIRD, Brown-headed | JEF 1 rep(6) |
| GOLDFINCH, American | JEF 4 reps(24) |
| SPARROW, House | JEF 3 reps(8) |

Number of Species 133
Number of Individuals 14711

County Abbreviations:
HAI - Hardin; JEF - Jefferson; ORA - Orange; TYL - Tyler

Location Codes:

BMT - Beaumont; NEDR - Nederland; PI - Pleasure Island, Port Arthur; SNDY - Nature Conservancy Sandyland Sanctuary; SW - Sabine Woods; TP - Tyrrell Park incl. Cattail Marsh; TX87 - Texas 87 Pt. Arthur-Sabine Pas; TXPT - Road to Pilot Station at Texas

Observer Abbreviations:

AM - Art MacKinnon; GD - Gerald Duhon; JAW - John Whittle; KS - Ken Sztraky; MW - Steve Mayes and John Whittle

Bird Alerts

On March 9, Kathi and Richard Orgeron found four cowbirds near the small pond east of the main slough in Sabine Woods - two males and two females. The males were coal black with very dark eyes and small, sharp pointed bills. The two females were also dark-eyed, and were dark brown with lighter brown/buff barring and each had a brown/buff line across the eye from the bill toward the back of the head. The Orgerons identified them as Shiny Cowbirds. Details of this sighting were emailed to our list, but so far, no one else has reported seeing these birds.

As this is being written (very late March), it is too early to say much about spring migration. Certainly, the habitat in Cattail Marsh in Tyrrell Park has been very favorable for shorebirds, and large numbers of dowitchers, yellowlegs and Least Sandpipers have been present. Also present were a few American Golden-Plover, numerous Pectoral Sandpipers, a few Solitary Sandpipers, and three very early Wilson's Phalaropes. American Golden-Plovers have also been seen in a number of locations in west Jefferson County. It seems that there may be more rice fields in cultivation than in recent years, and there may be some additional opportunities as these fields are flooded and then drained.

Several days in late March brought warblers in numbers to the coast, especially Prothonotary Warblers, but Northern Parula and Yellow-throated have also occurred along with a few Worm-eating, Black-and-White and Hooded Warblers. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are passing through, and the first Indigo Buntings and Eastern Kingbirds have been seen. A very few Scissor-tailed Flycatchers have also been noted.

Cedar Waxwing flocks - fairly small flocks or 20 or fewer birds - are being seen in Beaumont and mid-county. American Robins - birds that appear to be breeding rather than wintering or migrating - are currently very easy to find in the western parts of Nederland. The population density of this species has increased dramatically over the last few years. White-winged Doves also are showing signs and sounds of breeding in the same areas.

In migration, the birds are seen one day are usually gone the next. Also, many times, the best migration birding is in the afternoon, and there is usually no way to get the word out before dark. However, we do maintain a list of members to whom we send email notification of what birds are being seen. The email messages - rarely more than one a week in the "off-season", perhaps more during peak migration season - are sent in plain text, and are sent in such a way that the email addresses of the recipients do not appear on the email. No one can ascertain your email address from a message that we send out. If you want to be added to the list, please send your email address to John Whittle (whittleja@hal.lamar.edu).

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 on Siler's Birding on the Net at <http://birdingonthe.net/hotmail.html> Detailed information (maps and text) on birding sites on the Upper Texas Coast is also available on the Web at <http://www.texasbirding.net>. 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) 299-8175 |
| Louisiana | (504) 768-9874 |

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