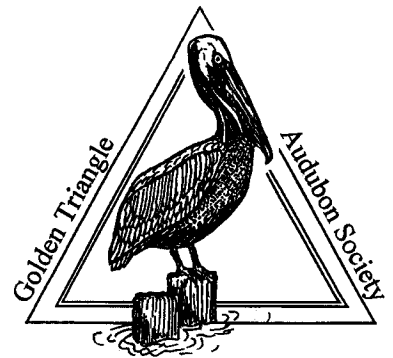


Brown Pelican

Scanned from Originals

The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 9 No. 1

January 2003

Membership Meeting

Thursday, January 16, 2003

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

Maximizing the Inspirational Value of Birding

David Baker

former Chief Interpreter for the Big Thicket National Preserve

In more than a decade at the Big Thicket National Preserve, David Baker was the quintessential interpreter of nature and natural processes for visitors to the Big Thicket, for area school children and for the public at large. David has graciously agreed to present a talk specifically focused on birding.

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.

Bluebird Boxes

At the January meeting, we hope to have up to 30 ready to mount bluebird boxes to give away to those members who have suitable locations in which to place them. The ideal bluebird box location is in a relatively open area with at least scattered large trees. We thank Bob Collier, Glen Cook, Terrel Gau, Joe Halbrook and Lynn Otto for constructing the boxes.

New Web Site

In this day and age, it has become essential for an organization like Golden Triangle Audubon Society to present its messages to its members and to the public through the Internet. While we have had a web site for some time now, recently we have not had anyone with both the knowledge and the time to keep it updated. We thank Travis Lewing for getting us started and hosting the site over the past two or three years, and regret that his professional commitments have left him without time to continue. We are very fortunate to have persuaded Jeff Pittman to step forward and assume the duties as our Webmaster. As you will see when you look at the site, Jeff is an expert in web site design and productions. Take a look at the new Web Site at www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

The Brown Pelican

Vol. 9, No.1 January 2003

Golden Triangle
Audubon Society

**RARE BIRD ALERT AND
SOCIETY INFORMATION
TELEPHONE NUMBER
(409) 768-1340**

www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

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Calendar of Events

Thursday January 16. Membership Meeting. See page 1 for details.

Saturday January 19. Field trip to Cattail Marsh. Meet at the parking lot for Cattail Marsh at 7:30 a.m. The parking lot is accessed from the loop road round the main picnic areas in Tyrrell Park in Beaumont. Some birds can be seen with minimal walking, but the group will probably make a leisurely three or so mile hike round the various cell in the marsh.

Thursday February 20. Membership Meeting. "Behavior of Birds on the Coastal Bend" by R.A.F. (Bill) Hill.

February 21-23. Whooping Crane Festival. Call 1-800-45COAST or see www.portaransas.org/cranes.asp for more details.

Saturday February 22. Field trip to West Harris County. Full details in the next issue of the *Brown Pelican*.

Thursday March 20. Membership Meeting. "Birding Optics" by Gerald Duhon.

Saturday April 12. Sea Rim SP Bird Walk. Meet at park HQ at 7:30 a.m. Easy walking to on boardwalk at Willows.

Thursday April 17. Membership Meeting. Speaker: Sandy Komito, author of "I Came, I Saw, I Counted"

Thursday May 15. Membership Meeting. Speaker: Victor Emanuel of Victor Emanuel Nature Tours.

Volunteer Needed

Ken Sztraky has looked after our telephone answering machine for more than seven years, but is moving out of the 768 exchange area (Vidor). Is their a volunteer in Vidor or even someone elsewhere who would like to provide service to our members? We use the recording to provide information as well as receive messages. Most of the information would reach the volunteer

by email. To volunteer, contact any Board member – see panel opposite for numbers.

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. Volunteers are now solicited for all 2003. 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.

Important Audubon Election Under Way

Nominations are now open for, the Chapter-selected candidate from the Southwestern Election Region to the National Audubon Society Board of Directors. Any Chapter, in the Southwestern Region may nominate one candidate for the Board this fall and winter. The election choose the candidate will be held in the spring.

Contact a Chapter officer with your suggestions. The Board of Directors will select a nominee immediately after the Membership Meeting on January 17, 2003.

Bird Sightings – November 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: Another very interesting month with numerous "late" warblers, a very late Yellow-billed Cuckoo and an "invasion" of Golden-crowned Kinglets everywhere. Juncos were seen frequently on the coast (including one most closely resembling the Pink-sided race), and other sparrows were seen in good numbers, contrary apparently to experience elsewhere. The late warblers included a probable Prairie Warbler, numerous late Tennessee warblers, a very late Black-throated Green Warbler that hung around Sabine Woods for a while, and a very late Worm-eating Warbler in Orange. Early November brought an influx of sparrows, as it has in each of the last few years. Possibly, birders have looked for them more thoroughly, knowing that there can be species that are hard to find otherwise among them.

LOON, Common	JEF 1 rep(2)	HARRIER, Northern	JEF 10 reps(24)
GREBE, Pied-billed	JEF 3 reps(9)	HAWK, Sharp-shinned	JEF 3 reps(3)
GREBE, Eared	JEF 1 rep(1)	HAWK, Cooper's	JEF-SW 11/16(2) MW; JEF 11/17(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/23(1) FTSP
PELICAN, Amer. White	JEF 7 reps(286)	ACCIPITER species	JEF 11/24(1) JAW
PELICAN, Brown	JEF-PI 11/3(1) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/3(18) JAW; JEF-SRSP 11/17(8) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/23(10) FTSP	HAWK, Red-shouldered	JAS 1 rep(1); JEF 6 reps(7); ORA 1 rep(1)
CORMORANT, Neotropic	JEF 20 reps(295); ORA 1 rep (20)	HAWK, Broad-winged	JEF-SW 11/3(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/9(1) MHW; JEF-SW 11/16(1) MW; JEF-SW 11/23(1) FTSP; ORA 11/26(1) SBE
CORMORANT, Double-crest.	JEF 6 reps(59)	HAWK, Red-tailed	JEF 12 reps(55); ORA 2 reps(2)
ANHINGA	JEF 3 reps(4)	KESTREL, American	JEF 10 reps(79)
HERON, Great Blue	JEF 11 reps(70); ORA 1 rep(2)	MERLIN	JEF-SW 11/16(1) MW; JEF-SW 11/23(1) FTSP
EGRET, Great	JAS 1 rep(2); JEF 11 reps(144); ORA 1 rep(20)	BOBWHITE, Northern	JEF 1 rep(12)
EGRET, Snowy	JAS 1 rep(2); JEF 11 reps(309)	RAIL, Clapper	JEF 6 reps(25)
HERON, Little Blue	JEF 1 rep(2)	SORA	JEF 1 rep(1)
HERON, Tricolored	JEF 4 reps(19)	MOORHEN, Common	JEF 1 rep(5)
EGRET, Reddish	JEF 1 rep(1)	COOT, American	JEF 2 reps(450)
EGRET, Cattle	JEF 5 reps(21)	CRANE, Sandhill	JEF-TP 11/17(30) JAW
HERON, Green	JEF-TXPT 11/3(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 11/23(1) FTSP; JEF 11/29(1) JAW; JEF-TP 11/30(1) JAW	PLOVER, Black-bellied	JEF 4 reps(11)
NIGHT-HERON, Black-cr.	JEF 4 reps(12)	PLOVER, Snowy	JEF-SRSP 11/17(22) JAW; JEF-SRSP 11/29(21) JAW
IBIS, White	JEF-TXPT 11/2(17) MHW; JEF-TXPT 11/3(13) JAW; JEF-TX87 11/9(4) MHW; JEF-TXPT 11/9(34) MHW; JEF 11/10(42) JAW; JEF-TP 11/17(24) JAW	PLOVER, Semipalmated	JEF 1 rep(1)
IBIS, White-faced	JEF-TP 11/17(4) JAW	KILLDEER	JEF 12 reps(193)
IBIS, Plegadis	JEF-SW 11/16(10) MW; JEF-TP 11/17(4) JAW	OYSTERCATCHER, Amer.	JEF-TXPT 11/17(1) JAW
SPOONBILL, Roseate	JEF 12 reps(111); ORA 1 rep(3)	STILT, Black-necked	JEF 8 reps(249)
VULTURE, Black	JEF 9 reps(41)	AVOCET, American	JEF 5 reps(70)
VULTURE, Turkey	HAI 1 rep(3); JAS 1 rep(11); JEF 9 reps(48)	YELLOWLEGS, Greater	JEF 5 reps(16)
GOOSE, White-fronted	JEF 3 reps(84)	YELLOWLEGS, Lesser	JEF 2 reps(41)
GOOSE, Snow	JEF 6 reps(1717)	WILLET	JEF 6 reps(35)
GOOSE, Ross's	JEF-SW 11/16(1) MW; JEF 11/30(6) JAW	SANDPIPER, Spotted	JEF-PI 11/3(6) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/9(1) MHW
GADWALL	JEF 2 reps(300)	TURNSTONE, Ruddy	JEF 1 rep(1)
WIGEON, American	JEF 2 reps(5)	SANDERLING	JEF 2 reps(123)
MALLARD	JEF 1 rep(13)	SANDPIPER, Peep	JEF 2 reps(23)
DUCK, Mottled	JEF-TP 11/17(1) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/23(4) FTSP; JEF 11/30(10) JAW; JEF-TP 11/30(4) JAW	SANDPIPER, Least	JEF 2 reps(46)
TEAL, Blue-winged	JEF 4 reps(366)	DUNLIN	JEF 1 rep(1)
TEAL species	JEF 1 rep(30)	SANDPIPER, Stilt	JEF-TP 11/30(16) JAW
SHOVELER, Northern	JEF 4 reps(1130)	DOWITCHER, Long-billed	JEF 1 rep(200)
PINTAIL, Northern	JEF 3 reps(40)	DOWITCHER species	JEF 2 reps(55)
TEAL, Green-winged	JEF 2 reps(850)	SNIFE, Wilson's	JEF 3 reps(13)
DUCK, Ring-necked	JEF 2 reps(200)	WOODCOCK, American	JEF-SW 11/17(1) GD
SCAUP, Greater	JEF-TP 11/30(2) JAW	GULL, Laughing	JEF 9 reps(1268)
SCAUP, Lesser	JEF 5 reps(1063)	GULL, Bonaparte's	JEF-TP 11/17(2) JAW
BUFFLEHEAD	JEF-TP 11/30(8) JAW	GULL, Ring-billed	JEF 8 reps(627)
MERGANSER, Red-breasted	JEF-SRSP 11/17(6) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/17(1) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/23(6) FTSP; JEF-TXPT 11/29(2) JAW	GULL, Herring	JEF 3 reps(8)
DUCK species	JEF 3 reps(900)	TERN, Gull-billed	JEF-TXPT 11/3(1) JAW
DUCK, Ruddy	JEF 2 reps(125)	TERN, Caspian	JEF 6 reps(35)
OSPREY	JEF-TX87 11/2(1) SM; JEF-TX87 11/3(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 11/17(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 11/23(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 11/29(1) JAW	TERN, Royal	JEF 3 reps(166)
KITE, White-tailed	JEF 6 reps(12)	TERN, Forster's	JEF 8 reps(113)
		SKIMMER, Black	JEF 1 rep(200)
		DOVE, Rock	JEF 9 reps(113)
		COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian	JEF 6 reps(44)
		DOVE, White-winged	JEF 7 reps(7)
		DOVE, Mourning	JAS 1 rep(1); JEF 12 reps(366)
		DOVE, Inca	JEF 1 rep(1)
		CUCKOO, Yellow-billed	JEF-SRSP 11/2(1) MHW

OWL, Barn JEF-SW 11/2(4) MHW;
 JEF-SW 11/3(4) JAW; JEF-SW 11/17(4) JAW; JEF-SW
 11/23(3) FTSP; JEF-SW 11/29(1) JAW
SCREECH-OWL, Eastern JEF 11/10(1) JAW
OWL, Great Horned JEF-SW 11/2(2) MHW; JEF-SW
 11/9(1) MHW
HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-thr. JEF-NEDR 11/1(1) JJW; JEF-NEDR
 11/2(1) JFW; JEF-NEDR 11/2(1) MHW; JEF-SW 11/2(5)
 MHW; JEF-SW 11/3(2) JAW; JEF-NEDR 11/12(1) JAW;
 JEF-NEDR 11/15(1) JFW
HUMMINGBIRD, Black-ch. ORA 11/11(1) SBE
HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous JEF-NEDR 11/27(1) JJW
HUMMINGBIRD species JEF-NEDR 11/24(1) JAW
KINGFISHER, Belted JAS 1 rep(1); JEF 11 reps(78); ORA 1
 rep(1)
WOODPECKER, Red-bellied JAS 1 rep(1); JEF 11 reps(14); ORA 4
 reps(4)
SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bell. JEF 7 reps(15)
WOODPECKER, Downy JAS 1 rep(1); JEF 8 reps(18); ORA 1
 rep(1)
FLICKER, Northern JAS 1 rep(1); JEF 9 reps(25)
WOODPECKER, Pileated JEF 1 rep(1)
WOOD-PEWEE, Eastern JEF-SRSP 11/2(1) MHW; JEF-SRSP
 11/3(2) JAW; JEF-SW 11/3(2) JAW; JEF-SW 11/9(2) MHW
PHOEBE, Eastern JAS 1 rep(3); JEF 11 reps(79); ORA 1
 rep(1)
FLYCATCHER, Vermilion JEF 11/24(1) JAW
FLYCATCHER, Ash-thr. JEF-SW 11/2(1) JAW
FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tail. JEF-TX87 11/3(1) JAW; JEF-TX87
 11/9(2) MHW; JEF 11/10(1) JAW
SHRIKE, Loggerhead JEF 13 reps(169)
VIREO, White-eyed JEF-SW 11/2(1) MHW; JEF-SW
 11/3(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/9(1) MHW
VIREO, Bell's JEF 11/10(1) JAW
VIREO, Blue-headed JEF 3 reps(5)
JAY, Blue JEF 11 reps(1788); ORA 4 reps(8)
CROW, American JAS 1 rep(12)
CROW, Fish JEF 11/30(1) JAW; JEF-TP 11/30(78)
 JAW
CROW, species JAS 1 rep(1); JEF 2 reps(8)
SWALLOW, Tree JEF-SRSP 11/9(2) MHW; JEF
 11/10(2) JAW; JEF-SW 11/16(8) MW; JEF-SRSP 11/17(1)
 JAW; JEF-TP 11/17(29) JAW; JEF-SW 11/23(6) FTSP; JEF
 11/29(5) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/29(13) JAW; JEF-TP 11/30(5)
 JAW
SWALLOW species JEF 2 reps(5)
CHICKADEE, Carolina JAS 1 rep(4); JEF 2 reps(9); ORA 5
 reps(7)
TITMOUSE, Tufted ORA 3 reps(4)
NUTHATCH, Brown-headed JAS 11/24(2) JAW
CREEPER, Brown JEF-TXPT 11/2(1) SM; JEF 11/30(1)
 JAW
WREN, Carolina JAS 1 rep(1); JEF 6 reps(9); ORA 1
 rep(1)
WREN, House JAS 11/24(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 11/2(1)
 MHW; JEF-SW 11/2(1) MHW; JEF-SW 11/9(2) MHW; JEF
 11/10(2) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/17(1) JAW
WREN, Winter JEF-TXPT 11/2(1) SM; JEF-TXPT
 11/3(1) JAW
WREN, Sedge JEF-SRSP 11/17(3) JAW; JEF-TXPT
 11/17(2) JAW
WREN, Marsh JEF-TXPT 11/2(2) SM; JEF-TXPT
 11/3(3) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/9(1) MHW; JEF-TP 11/17(1)
 JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/17(2) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/23(1) FTSP;
 JEF-TXPT 11/29(2) JAW
KINGLET, Golden-crowned JEF-SRSP 11/2(5) MHW; JEF-SW
 11/2(20) MHW; JEF-TXPT 11/2(2) MHW; JEF-SRSP 11/3(3)
 JAW; JEF-SW 11/3(7) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/3(2) JAW;
 JEF-SW 11/9(3) MHW; JEF-SW 11/16(3) MW; JEF-TP
 11/20(2) SBE; JEF-SW 11/23(5) FTSP JEF-SRSP 11/29(2)
 JAW; JEF-SW 11/29(4) JAW
KINGLET, Ruby-crowned JAS 1 rep(2); JEF 9 reps(92)
GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray JAS 1 rep(1); JEF 9 reps(61)
BLUEBIRD, Eastern JAS 1 rep(12); JEF 4 reps(41)
THRUSH, Hermit JEF-SRSP 11/2(1) MHW; JEF-SW
 11/2(1) MHW; JEF-SRSP 11/3(3) JAW; JEF-SW 11/3(3)
 JAW; JEF-SW 11/9(1) MHW; JEF 11/10(1) JAW; JEF-SW
 11/16(5) MW; JEF-TXPT 11/16(1) MW; JEF-SRSP 11/17(1)

JAW; JEF-SW 11/17(8) JAW JEF-SW 11/23(3) FTSP
ROBIN, American JAS 1 rep(2); JEF 13 reps(49)
CATBIRD, Gray JEF-SW 11/2(5) MHW; JEF-SW
 11/3(2) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/3(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 11/9(1)
 MHW; JEF-SW 11/9(1) MHW; JEF-SW 11/23(2) FTSP
MOCKINGBIRD, Northern JAS 1 rep(1); JEF 12 reps(116); ORA
 2 reps(4)
THRASHER, Brown JEF 8 reps(38)
STARLING, European JEF 10 reps(1131); ORA 1 rep(50)
PIPIT, American JEF 3 reps(56)
WAXWING, Cedar JEF-SW 11/23(11) FTSP
WARBLER, Tennessee JEF-SW 11/2(6) MHW; JEF-TXPT
 11/3(4) JAW; JEF-SW 11/9(2) MHW; JEF-SW 11/16(2) MW;
 ORA 11/16(3) SBE
WARBLER, Orange-crowned JEF 6 reps(20)
PARULA, Northern JEF-SW 11/2(1) MHW
WARBLER, Magnolia JEF-SRSP 11/2(1) MHW; JEF-SW
 11/2(1) MHW
WARBLER, Yellow-rumped JAS 1 rep(10); JEF 11 reps(98); ORA
 3 reps(12)
WARBLER, Black-thr. Green JEF-SW 11/2(2) MHW; JEF-SW
 11/3(2) JAW; JEF-SW 11/9(1) MHW; JEF-SW 11/23(1) FTSP
WARBLER, Pine JEF 4 reps(17)
WARBLER, Prairie JEF 11/24(1) JAW
REDSTART, American JEF-SW 11/2(4) MHW; JEF-SW
 11/16(3) MW; JEF-SW 11/17(3) JAW
WARBLER, Worm-eating ORA 11/8(1) SBE
YELLOWTHROAT, Common JEF 4 reps(10)
WARBLER, Wilson's JEF-SW 11/2(2) MHW; JEF-SW
 11/9(1) MHW; JEF-SW 11/17(1) JAW; ORA 11/16(1) SBE
TANAGER, Summer JEF-SW 11/2(1) MHW; JEF-SW
 11/9(1) MHW
TOWHEE, Eastern JEF-SW 11/16(1) MW; JEF-SW
 11/17(3) JAW; JEF-SW 11/23(2) FTSP; JEF 11/29(1) JAW;
 ORA 11/26(1) SBE
SPARROW, Chipping JEF-TP 11/17(5) JAW; JEF-TXPT
 11/17(1) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/23(3) FTSP
SPARROW, Field JEF-TXPT 11/17(3) JAW; JEF-TX87
 11/23(2) FTSP
SPARROW, Savannah JEF 6 reps(34)
SPARROW, Grasshopper JEF-SW 11/2(2) MHW
SPARROW, Nelson's Sharp-t. JEF 6 reps(133)
SPARROW, Seaside JEF 6 reps(82)
SPARROW, Song JEF-TXPT 11/2(1) JAW; JEF-SW
 11/3(1) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/9(1) MHW; JEF-TX87 11/23(3)
 FTSP; JEF 11/29(3) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/29(1) JAW
SPARROW, Lincoln's JEF-TXPT 11/17(1) JAW; JEF-TXPT
 11/23(1) FTSP
SPARROW, Swamp JEF 5 reps(26)
SPARROW, White-throated JAS 1 rep(3); JEF 7 reps(37)
SPARROW, White-crowned JEF-TXPT 11/2(6) MHW; JEF-TXPT
 11/3(3) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/17(3) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/23(2)
 FTSP; JEF 11/30(2) JAW; ORA 11/13(2) SBE
JUNCO, Dark-eyed JEF-TXPT 11/17(2) JAW; JEF-TXPT
 11/23(1) FTSP; JEF 11/24(1) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/29(1) JAW
JUNCO, Dark-eyed (Pink-sid.) JEF-TXPT 11/2(1) MHW
CARDINAL, Northern JAS 1 rep(4); JEF 10 reps(33); ORA 6
 reps(44)
GROSBEAK, Rose-breasted JEF-SW 11/2(1) MHW
GROSBEAK, Blue JEF-SW 11/3(2) JAW; JEF-SW 11/9(3)
 MHW
BUNTING, Indigo JEF-SW 11/2(2) MHW; JEF-SW
 11/3(3) JAW; JEF-SW 11/9(1) MHW; JEF-SW 11/16(4) MW
BLACKBIRD, Red-winged JEF 12 reps(799); ORA 2 reps(80)
MEADOWLARK, Eastern JEF 5 reps(29)
MEADOWLARK species JEF 4 reps(20)
GRACKLE, Common JEF 5 reps(3390)
GRACKLE, Boat-tailed JEF 8 reps(657)
GRACKLE, Great-tailed JEF 10 reps(1090)
COWBIRD, Brown-headed JEF 5 reps(426)
BLACKBIRD species JEF 1 rep(35)
GOLDFINCH, American JAS 11/24(2) JAW; JEF-TP 11/17(1)
 JAW; JEF-SW 11/23(7) FTSP; JEF 11/24(8) JAW; JEF-TXPT
 11/29(4) JAW; JEF 11/30(25) JAW; ORA 11/13(2) SBE
SPARROW, House JEF 5 reps(33); ORA 1 rep(2)
Number of Species 174
Number of Individuals 24954

(continued on page 6)

Birding by Boat

by Gerald Duhon

Well, by ship really.....

On 12-01-02, my wife and I along with two other friends boarded the Royal Caribbean cruise ship "*Rhapsody of the Seas*" at Galveston. Ports of call included Key West, Belize City, and the island of Cozumel.

Being interested mostly in the birding aspects of the trip, and aware that a number of Golden Triangle Audubon Society members may at some time or another participate in such a vacation, either willingly or not, the following may provide some guidelines for maximizing your time afield.

To begin with, don't allocate large blocks of time to staring out over the railing. If you are like me, you'll have better luck at the Casino, as one of the most surprising aspects of the journey was the lack of seabird sightings. Not knowing really what to expect, I had visions of uncountable Jaegers, Boobies, Shearwaters etc. crowding around the vessel, sailing in perfect synchronicity with the speed of the ship for the long, leisurely views that we so covet in life sightings. High anticipation soon turned to gloom, however, as it quickly became apparent that this was a BIG ocean. The whole 2600 plus miles yielded basically *no* pelagic of any kind.

As might be expected, the real downside to such an excursion is the limited time in any one area (save of course for the Gulf, of which we saw plenty). We put in at Key West for only six or so hours, not docking until 3 p.m. Right off the gangplank I had *Palm Warbler*, in a Palm Tree, of all things! This bird was traveling in the company of a *Yellow-throated Warble* -- both were actively foraging below hordes of people and acres of concrete. My sense was that, with a little more daylight, the old homes and lush yards would have been quite productive.

Next stop, Belize City, for a total of about nine hours. The *Rhapsody* was unable to get closer than five miles to port, as the town has no real facilities for 79,000 tons of boat. Passengers were ferried ashore via high-speed transport. Belize is a poor country, and cannot compete in glitz factor with the likes of Cancun. But Belize has a high percentage of land put aside in reserves and parks -- it is relatively undeveloped and safe. A variety of packaged "shore excursions" are available (going for about \$80 or so per person) that take the bother out of jungle trekking. Apparently, they get precious few birders aboard these ships, as the "Excursion Desk" staff responded with generally blank stares when posed the question, "Which one of these things produces the most birds?" Day trips ranged from "cave tubing" preceded by a "moderately strenuous 45-minute hike down a jungle trail" (that one sounded interesting) to a variety of visits to local Mayan ruins. Such sites, in my experience, often yield gobs of edge habitat, maintained forest trails, and open grassy areas. Some of the best birding in the Neotropics can be found here. The one that caught my eye was the "Jungle River Cruise and Lamanai Ruin" run, since in the description it mentioned participants would be treated to views of "kites, hawks and falcons". NOW we're talkin'!

Before I go into the trip itself, let me describe a potential alternative approach. The couple that accompanied us (both nonbirders), simply rented a taxi for a full day at a cost of \$100. Somewhat pricey, but still coming in at around half of the organized per person tour cost. It is my understanding that better than 50% of the cab drivers in Belize City are licensed by the government as tour guides. They had a wonderful time with a very courteous, knowledgeable cabbie. His words were "this is your day- you tell me where you want to go, and when you want to stop, and that's what we'll do". So it would be possible to simply retain a cab, and instruct the driver to

"show me the birds!" This would vastly increase the time actually spent in birding. One possible 30 minute ride would be to "Crooked Tree Swamp", a protected wetlands with a variety of species. Alongside of several of the roads we traveled were wide grassy swaths bordered by thick growth that could be slowly traversed for lifers. Shoulders suitable for pullout birding seem to be numerous. Belize City itself is built on a Mangrove Swamp -- huge concrete pilings must be sunk into bedrock before any substantial edifice can be brought to completion. As a result, wet expanses of marshy habitat are found all over.

A couple of Greyhound-sized busses were loaded up by about 9 a.m. Our guide, who introduced himself as "Captain Chino" and a full-blooded Mayan, was upbeat, lively and entertaining. As the vehicle slowed to cross a bridge, I spotted a *Tropical Mockingbird* sitting out in the open on a bare limb. I excitedly pointed this out to my sometimes birder wife -- the "Capin" immediately took notice, and also called the group's attention to the bird. I had purposely snagged the front bench on the bus, in order to scan the highway. This was my first chance to talk to him privately, and indicate my desire to break away from the main group and bird while at the ruins, meeting him back at the boat landing at the appointed time. I had my Webb and Howell "*Birds of Mexico*" open in my lap. Capin' Chino grinned and said "you can check me out with your book!" So I did. Turns out our guide has an extensive, self-taught knowledge base in reference to the indigenous flora and fauna, particularly birds. He then began a speech to the assembled adventurers about birders: "These are the guys who get up a 5 o'clock in the morning, walk for hours in the jungle without talking -- every time they see a bird they haven't seen before, they check it off their list". Sounds like he's run up on our kind before. During the ride to the disembarkation point, I spotted *Boat-billed Flycatcher* and *Great Kiskadee*.

A half-hour or so later, we were at the river, the name of which I cannot recall. We proceeded to board a small, open-air cruiser, very comfortable and very fast. *Mangrove Swallow* was abundant here by the dock, as well as over the water. *Tropical Kingbird* performed sallies along the bank. Not long after we pulled into the main channel a *Snail Kite* was flushed--these birds are evidently fairly common here, as we had two on the ride up to the ruins. The youngster had been lounging in a cane break along the shore -- the Capin' proceeded to hold up examples of their mainstay cuisine, Apple Snails. Not long afterwards, the boat pulled alongside a partially submerged lily pad field -- two fine adult *Northern Jacana* allowed a close approach as our guide went into some detail concerning their mating style -- one female for several males. I had seen this bird once at Falcon Dam, but of course not at arm's length. Several times we were forced to negotiate small bayou type ditches, and on one a chunky, dark form was glimpsed sailing from tree to tree. "*White-collared Puffbird*", announced the Capin', and I was more than ready to take his word on it. There were several kettles of mixed soaring birds, mostly *Turkey Vultures* but including raptor-like silhouettes as well- unfortunately we were not able to slow to examine them. In one such grouping I spotted a *Wood Stork*. As we neared the Lamanai dock, our guide showed us a pair of *Jabiru* on the nest. Even at a distance, these seemingly pony sized storks were a standout -- their huge platform nest of sticks prominent in the upper canopy.

As we disembarked, the Capin' pulled me off to the side and advised "Try and not be any later than 1:30". I felt like saluting. As the rest of the group treated themselves to a brief lunch, off I went.

The Lamanai, or "Little Crocodile" ruins, have not been fully excavated and certainly not developed to any great extent, and as such contain *bona fide*, real, live jungle. The trails are well cleared albeit narrow. Unless you have been in a Central American forest like this, it's a little hard to describe. Huge ficus the size of oak trees were about the only thing I could ID in the way of plants. The foliage is thick but yet strangely open at the same time. Light levels are fully ambient and quite dark even at midday. If you go, be sure and pack widefield, low power binoculars -- close focusing roof type of 7 or 8 times magnification would be ideal. Palm fronds as big as eighteen wheelers side the paths. Everything is a dark, saturated shade of green. As I eased away from the group, the intense growth seemed to swallow all sounds of their chatter in a matter of seconds. Random chips from every compass point began to resolve from the intense quiet. Time for my famous patented Pygmy Owl hoots. Rats. OK, let's try Screech Owl. Within seconds some old friends came by for a visit-- *Black-throated Green*, *Magnolia*, *Black-and-white Warbler*, *American Redstart* and *Yellow-throated Warbler*. Then, the first of the "tropicals" -- an absolutely stunning male *Olive-backed Euphonia*, a kind of mini-tanager that thinks it's a warbler too. This bird came within 3 feet, as it appeared to be closely checking me out. A couple of steps further on I found an *Ivory-billed Woodcreeper* staring intently in my direction.

At the terminus of each trail I found a cleared area with a pyramid; each was actively being restored (?) by a crew of workers; several structures with scaffolding in place. The attendees were mostly locals, but quite friendly -- they proudly indicated a family group of Howler Monkeys munching in the top of a huge tree. I had birded the base and environs of this monster for several minutes when my wife gestured in the direction of a seemingly homogenous expanse of greenery at eye level, just to the left of the trunk. "What's that bird?" "Where?" "Over there" "Over WHERE!" "THERE -- SEE THAT VINE ?!?" After a few more moments of this type of exchange, the critter slowly resolved itself -- a *Collared Forest Falcon*, all in tones of black and white, sitting quite still, raptor eyes fixed firmly on us. Once discovered, it flew silently into the jungle and was gone. There seemed to be some activity in the direction down the trail a bit, and a few owl toots produced *Hooded* and *Kentucky Warbler*, and a dead ringer for a *Yellow-bellied Flycatcher*. Then, once again, wifey grabbed the gold ring-- "Up top, whatever it is it's BIG...." No trouble spotting this pair of *Collared Toucans* -- how DO they fly with that bill? Quite well, actually. Such encounters are undoubtedly one of the most exhilarating aspects of winter birding in the Neotropics -- the cheek to jowl mix of totally exotic endemics and familiar North American migrants. Not wanting to miss the Capin's muster call, we rejoined our party. He quickly took me aside and pointed out a *Slaty-tailed Trogon*. We hung back from the assemblage a bit for one last photo op. As I focused on Becky and fiddled with the flash, my eye caught some barely noticeable movement of leaves along the ground -- "DON'T MOVE A MUSCLE !!" Camera down, bins up-- this chance encounter produced what may have been the highlight of the day -- *Thrushlike Mourner* -- a bird Webb and Howell describe as "rarely seen unless a singing bird is tracked down."

Altogether 7 lifers, not bad for an hour and a half in the jungle during the middle of the day. As the group took a break just prior to boarding the bus, numerous *White-collared Seedeaters* were working the roadside seedheads, and a brilliant male *Vermillion Flycatcher* perched on the phone lines overhead.

I highly recommend this day trip in the port of call of Belize -- in fact, if you can prearrange a seat on Capin' Chino's ride, you will definitely find a kindred birding soul, and a fine, considerate guide as well. Much thanks to him and

his tour company, *Cruise Solutions*, 5916 Manatee Drive, Buttonwood Bay, P.O. Box 1217, Belize City, Belize. www.belizeexcursions.com or you can reach him at carlene@belizeexcursions.com I spent a few moments post trip discussing the possibility of arranging a group birding visit, five or seven days or so. "NO problem", replies the Capin'. Spring in Belize, anyone?

(Next month: "On to Cozumel")

Bird Sightings (continued from page 4)

County Abbreviations:

HAI - Hardin; JAS - Jasper; JEF - Jefferson; ORA - Orange

Location Codes:

BC - Bridge City; 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:

FTSP - Field Trip to Sabine Pass; GD - Gerald Duhon; JAW - John Whittle; JFW - Jana Whittle; JJW - John and Jana Whittle; MHW - Steve Mayes, John Haynes, John Whittle; MW - Steve Mayes and John Whittle; SBE - Sheri Berthard; SM - Steve Mayes

Notes on Rare Species

Ash-throated Flycatcher -- 2 Nov 2002 -- John Whittle

Seen briefly but well in Sabine Woods. Myiarchus flycatcher of the general size of Great-crested/Brown-crested/Ash-throated. Brown above with red in wings and tail, very pale gray throat, pale lemon yellow belly. Tail brown with red, the red not extending to tip. Top of tail seen mostly. Bill all dark including base of lower mandible.

Bell's Vireo -- 10 Nov 2002 -- John Whittle

Seen on Todd Road in far west Jefferson County. Bird appeared in response to a brief screech owl tape. It first perched on top of giant ragweed -- then moved to branches near the top of a 15ft oak tree. A medium sized warbler -- clearly larger than the nearby Kinglet and Chickadee. Conspicuous were a rather wide and white eye-ring, slightly "broken", especially in front of the dark eye, and a rather gray face. Although there was white (with no yellow in it) between the eye and the base of the bill, it was not "clear" and was interrupted by a line of some kind. Although the back and wings had some olive brown undertones, the wings were predominantly gray with two wing bars, the lower much wider than the upper, and rather obvious when the wings were flicked. The underparts were white except for a pale yellow wash along the flanks. There were no streaks along the flanks, breast or belly. The bill was stout but reasonably sharp.

Prairie Warbler (probable) -- 24 Nov 2002 -- John Whittle

Seen, backlit, very briefly on Todd Road in far west Jefferson County. The bird appeared to be warbler sized, although no comparisons were available. The upperparts were gray or brown, the underparts were yellow, with two lines of strong streaks along sides. The face pattern included a darker line through the eye and a line below the eye in the shape of the bottom half of a circle

Dark-eyed (Pink-sided) Junco -- 2 Nov 2002 -- John Whittle

Bird was foraging on the road to the Pilot Station at Texas Point near its edges. The head was a medium to pale gray, with much darker gray, sharply demarcated, around the base of the yellowish bill. The back was a slightly darker gray, but with a brownish patch right in the middle of the back, but not extending quite to the wing coverts. The feather edges of the secondaries (especially) and primaries as seen in the folded wings were white. The underside was pale except for the gray throat and a relatively narrow gray brown wash/stripe along the side. This stripe was like the gray of the Slate-colored race in location and dimensions, but had a definite brownish tint to it. The tail was gray, with white outer tail feathers. Bill pale yellowish. This bird appeared to be an intergrade, perhaps three quarters Pink-sided.

Sea Rim State Park Christmas Bird Count

29 December 2002

Thanks to additional help this year from McFaddin and Texas Point Refuges, especially Marty Bray and Jeannie and Patrick Walther, we were able to cover more of the circle than ever before. The weather cooperated and the twenty eight participants enjoyed a very pleasant day of birding. The provisional total number of species seen is 158.

There has not yet been time for full analysis of the results, but we will hit a few highlights and some unusually high and low numbers. We have limited our comparisons to the years since 1995, when the count was restarted using a revised count circle.

Ducks have been very scarce in the immediate coastal area this year, but numbers seen were not as low as some of the dire descriptions might have portended. We counted more Gadwall and more Blue-winged Teal than in any previous year, and Northern Pintail numbers were the highest since 1995. However, Canvasback numbers were low, and Ruddy Ducks very low.

Seven Green Herons was a large number. High counts of both Piping and Snowy Plovers were encouraging. Laughing Gulls were somewhere else, but Royal Terns were plentiful. All species of woodpecker were present in high numbers, perhaps reflecting increasing areas of mature trees in the count circle, and perhaps more comprehensive coverage of them.

Tree Swallows were everywhere except on the immediate coast, and number of both species of kinglet and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were high. Pine Warblers have invaded the coastal plain this winter.

Species new to the count this year were Yellow Warbler -- a male seen in the tent camping area at Sea Rim State Park -- and House Finches found in Sabine Pass. "Misses" included Long-billed Curlew, Black Skimmer, and, for the second year in a row, Lesser Yellowlegs.

A fuller report will be sent to all participants about the middle of January, and will be posted on the Society's web site. Hard copies may also be requested from the editor.

SPECIES (TOTAL); LOON, Common (1); GREBE, Pied-billed (65); GREBE, Eared (10); GANNET, Northern (11); PELICAN, American White (1241); PELICAN, Brown (63); CORMORANT, Neotropic (280); CORMORANT, Double-crested (793); CORMORANT species (41); ANHINGA (5); BITTERN, American (5); HERON, Great Blue (121); EGRET, Great (183); EGRET, Snowy (337); HERON, Little Blue (39); HERON, Tricolored (222); EGRET, Reddish (1); EGRET, Cattle (1); HERON, Green (7); NIGHT-HERON, Black-crowned (152); NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crowned (16); IBIS, White (274); IBIS, White-faced (638); IBIS, *Plegadis* species (150); SPOONBILL, Roseate (153); VULTURE, Black (6); VULTURE, Turkey (22); WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous (12); GOOSE, Greater White-fronted (315); GOOSE, Snow (1060); GOOSE, Snow (White) (1674); GOOSE, Snow (Blue) (551); GOOSE, Ross's (2); GOOSE, Canada (6); GOOSE, species (4); GADWALL (1140); WIGEON, American (250); MALLARD (6); DUCK, Mottled (32); TEAL, Blue-winged (112); SHOVELER, Northern (426); PINTAIL, Northern (534); TEAL, Green-winged (3021); CANVASBACK (271); REDHEAD (6); DUCK, Ring-necked (12); SCAUP, Greater (2); SCAUP, Lesser (817); SCAUP, Species (116); BUFFLEHEAD (53); GOLDENEYE, Common (1); MERGANSER, Hooded (23); MERGANSER, Red-breasted (38); DUCK, Ruddy (103); DUCK, species (4); OSPREY (8); KITE, White-tailed (6); HARRIER, Northern (33); HAWK, Sharp-shinned (3); HAWK, Cooper's (3); HAWK, Red-shouldered (3); HAWK, Red-tailed (39); KESTREL, American (23); MERLIN (2); FALCON, Peregrine (3); RAIL, Yellow (1); RAIL, Clapper

(7); RAIL, King (9); RAIL, Virginia (2); SORA (1); RAIL, species (1); MOORHEN, Common (53); COOT, American (818); PLOVER, Black-bellied (81); PLOVER, Snowy (30); PLOVER, Semipalmated (62); PLOVER, Piping (16); KILLDEER (110); OYSTERCATCHER, American (2); STILT, Black-necked (190); AVOCET, American (317); YELLOWLEGS, Greater (9); WILLET (123); SANDPIPER, Spotted (5); WHIMBREL (5); GODWIT, Marbled (2); TURNSTONE, Ruddy (68); KNOT, Red (3); SANDERLING (205); SANDPIPER, Western (103); SANDPIPER, Least (97); DUNLIN (301); DOWITCHER, Short-billed (25); DOWITCHER, species (402); SNIPE, Wilson's (11); GULL, Laughing (364); GULL, Bonaparte's (151); GULL, Ring-billed (1025); GULL, Herring (58); TERN, Caspian (40); TERN, Royal (204); TERN, Sandwich (1); TERN, Common (2); TERN, Forster's (208); DOVE, Rock (12); COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian (17); DOVE, White-winged (33); DOVE, Mourning (140); DOVE, Inca (11); OWL, Barn (6); OWL, Great Horned (1); KINGFISHER, Belted (43); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (13); SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied (13); WOODPECKER, Downy (26); FLICKER, Northern (12); PHOEBE, Eastern (87); SHRIKE, Loggerhead (61); VIREO, White-eyed (1); VIREO, Blue-headed (2); JAY, Blue (52); SWALLOW, Tree (2087); CHICKADEE, Carolina (11); WREN, Carolina (5); WREN, House (9); WREN, Sedge (31); WREN, Marsh (10); KINGLET, Golden-crowned (37); KINGLET, Ruby-crowned (151); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (81); BLUEBIRD, Eastern (1); THRUSH, Hermit (22); ROBIN, American (227); CATBIRD, Gray (16); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (48); THRASHER, Brown (44); STARLING, European (184); PIPIT, American (16); WAXWING, Cedar (62); WARBLER, Orange-crowned (40); WARBLER, Yellow (1); WARBLER, Yellow-rumped (378); WARBLER, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) (9); WARBLER, Pine (36); WARBLER, Palm (1); YELLOWTHROAT, Common (26); TOWHEE, Eastern (1); SPARROW, Chipping (7); SPARROW, Savannah (180); SPARROW, LeConte's (5); SPARROW, Nelson's Sharp-tailed (48); SPARROW, Seaside (49); SPARROW, Song (35); SPARROW, Lincoln's (2); SPARROW, Swamp (170); SPARROW, White-throated (71); SPARROW, White-crowned (6); SPARROW, species (250); CARDINAL, Northern (66); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (3657); MEADOWLARK, Eastern (62); MEADOWLARK, species (3); GRACKLE, Common (85); GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (700); GRACKLE, Great-tailed (271); GRACKLE, species (110); COWBIRD, Brown-headed (79); FINCH, House (8); GOLDFINCH, American (37); SPARROW, House (15);); SPECIES, total (158); INDIVIDUALS, total (30643); Observers (28); Parties (11); Party-hours total (81); Party-miles total (210.5).

Orange Christmas Bird Count

1 January 2003

Only very preliminary results of the Orange count (compiler Ken Sztraky) are available at press time, and the results given here are probably incomplete and are both provisional and unofficial. Eleven observers tallied at least 127 species in clear but cool weather. Unofficially, last year's count total was 128.

New to the count were Sandhill Cranes (flying over), Stilt Sandpiper (probably overdue!), and Cassin's Vireo. Other good finds included Common Loon, Brown-headed Nuthatch, and Indigo Bunting.

The paucity of ducks on the coast and the absence of any permanent or semi-permanent shorebird habitat in the circle held down the number of species.

We hope to be able to present a fuller account of this count, and some details of the Turkey Creek, Beech Creek and Johnson Bayou counts in next month's *Brown Pelican*

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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.

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