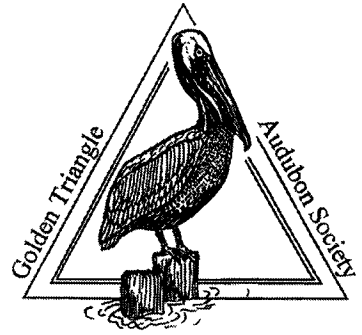


Brown Pelican

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The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 9 No. 4

April 2003

Membership Meeting
Thursday, April 17, 2003
6:30 PM, Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont

Sandy Komito

author of

"I Came, I Saw, I Counted"

Sandy Komito is a very well known birder, who in 1987 carried out a "Big Year" run trying to see as many bird species as possible in North America in one year. The 726 species – species accepted by the ABA – that he saw in that year stood as the record for over a decade. In 1998, Sandy engaged in another "Big Year" run and saw about 745 species. He describes his planning, his travel, and his adventures during that year in his book "I Came, I Saw, I Counted." The book is a travelogue of the year, interspersed with details of how the birds were tracked down, and of the fellow birders who were present. Also included are useful information on economical travel from Sandy's "Little Black Book". At press time, we have not received an exact title or other details for his talk.

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, a near record attendance of about fifty members and friends were present to hear Matt Whitbeck of Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge describe the breeding biology of the Seaside Sparrow and the results of his research into the breeding habitat preferences of the species. Based on experiments in four different locations on the upper Texas coast, he showed that breeding density was highest in the second year after a given area of marsh was burned.

We thank Pat and Don Jeane and Lu and Grady Skillern for providing the refreshments for the meeting. he refreshments.

John A. Whittle

The Brown Pelican

Vol. 9, No.4 April 2003

Golden Triangle
Audubon Society

**RARE BIRD ALERT AND
SOCIETY INFORMATION
TELEPHONE NUMBER
Temporarily out of service.**

www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

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The Brown Pelican is

published monthly except July
by the Golden Triangle
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Texas 77627-1292

Calendar of Events

Yellow Rail Walks at Anahuac NWR

April 5 (Saturday) 7 am

April 6 (Sunday) 4 pm

April 12 (Saturday) 4 pm

April 13 (Sunday) 7 am and 4 pm

April 19 (Saturday) 7 am and 4 pm

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. (Matt Whitbeck will lead the April 5 walk.)

There is no charge for these walks. You should be in good shape to go onto the prairie, although many in their 70's go on these trips with no problem (the record age is now 78).

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 areas where water would cover the feet are avoided so waterproof hiking boots will be fine. No one will be allowed on the walk with open toe shoes, sandals, or barefoot.

If you are less able to go into the prairie you still have a good chance to see a Yellow Rail by standing at the edge of the prairie and watch the walkers with binoculars or scope. Many have been very successful this way.

There are LOTS of mosquitoes on the Yellow Rail Prairie; long sleeves are recommended, as is insect repellent.

Saturday April 12. Sea Rim SP Bird Walk. Jointly sponsored by Sea Rim State Park and Golden Triangle Audubon. Meet at Park HQ at 7:30 a.m. Easy walking (or driving) to the boardwalk at Willows. Later, drive to Sabine Woods to continue birding for those who wish. Easy walking on the boardwalks at both locations. This field trip is especially suited for not-very-experienced birders, and those who are unable to walk over rougher ground.

Sea Rim State Park is on Highway 87, 10 miles west of Sabine Pass.

Thursday April 17. Membership Meeting. Speaker: Sandy Komito, author of "I Came, I Saw, I Counted" See page 1 for details.

Saturday/Sunday May 3/4. Spring Garden Tour. The Beaumont Council of Garden Clubs is seeking volunteers to staff this event. Please contact Joe Halbrook at (409) 892-3090.

April 25, 26 and 27. Birding in the Big Thicket festival, Kountze, Texas. For program and further information, go to www.kountzecoc.org or call the Kountze Chamber of Commerce (409) 246-3413 or toll free at (866) 456-8689 or email Lauraallums@sbcglobal.net.

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

Volunteer Urgently Needed

Ken Sztraky has looked after our telephone answering machine for more than seven years, but has moved to Silsbee. Is there a volunteer in Vidor or anywhere else in the triangle 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. It is possible that we will change from a landline to a cell phone line, which we hope would permit the task to be shared by several members and carried out from anywhere in the Triangle. 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. We thank Andrea Billingsley and Sherry Gibson for volunteering to bring refreshments in April. Volunteers are now solicited for May 2003 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!

Sabine Woods

As migration season approaches, we have been doing a lot of work at Sabine Woods. On March 15, we had a very productive work day, and most sincerely, thank all of those who helped, both on the day itself, and on the days before and after. We especially thank Marty Bray and Craig Crenshaw of McFaddin NWR for extensive assistance. We also thank and salute our other volunteers: Andrea Billingsley, Bob Davis, Howard Davis, Sherry Gibson, Tommy Gore, Jeannie Heltzel, Robert Hurt, Harrison Jordan, Steve Mayes, Jeff Pittman.

Some of the work we have done has at least temporarily changed the appearance of areas near the entrance to the Sanctuary. We are therefore taking this opportunity to explain some of the conservation and management activities at the Woods.

First of all, we would note that all activities are conducted in accordance with a Conservation Plan. The sanctuary is maintained primarily to benefit neotropical migrant songbirds by acting as stopover habitat in both spring and fall. Secondly, it provides nesting habitat for a few species (including Painted Bunting, Orchard Oriole and Yellow-billed Cuckoo), as well as wintering habitat for species such as Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped Warbler, and a variety of sparrow species. A number of species can be found year round, including Downy Woodpeckers, Blue Jays and Cardinals.

The sanctuary will not serve any of these functions unless certain maintenance activities are undertaken. As many of you know, the oaks, which along with the hackberries and willows, provide the habitat for a large variety of migrant passerine species, are not native to the area. The oldest oaks were planted around 1900 by the Broussard family, which established a homestead on the former beach ridge which runs east-west through the central part of the sanctuary. It is reported that the trees were grown from acorns brought from Louisiana. While additional oaks have been planted or have grown from naturally dispersed acorns, most of the "new growth" oaks in the western part

of the sanctuary were planted shortly after Texas Ornithological Society purchased the property in 1989.

To enable these new oaks to grow, we have been mowing around them to prevent the growth of faster growing competing species and have been cutting mustang grape vines, which, if unchecked, can choke and kill live oaks.

The area just to the left (west) of the main entrance gate is being kept clear of woody growth for the possible future establishment of a hummingbird and butterfly garden. This necessitates clearing the area at intervals of three to four years. This is done in the early spring, so that the area will have grown back and will provide seeds for fall migrants and wintering species the following fall and winter.

The area to the right (east) of the main sanctuary is similarly being cleared every third year. The plan here is to perhaps expand the oak motte to the east by planting additional oaks on the higher parts. We may in the future create a parking area near the east gate.

A few other open areas are also being retained as "meadows" for the benefit of buntings and other seed eating species.

Those of you who have watched our maintenance activities over the last few years will know that there are several invasive non-native plant and tree species that threaten to overwhelm the desirable trees and vegetation. Tallow eradication is in its final stages, but will require constant vigilance for many more years. In addition, each year we remove some water hyacinth, which we believe is carried in on the legs of larger herons and night herons. We have referred to the need to control the mustang grape, and have determined to encourage yaupon as the understory bush of choice, and phase out the privet. The wild rose is also too invasive to retain, and very difficult to remove!

Subscription Renewal Reminder

Please check the mailing label on this issue. If the date on your label NOT prefixed by AU has passed, or there is

no other date, 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.

Garden Show March 22

Our booth at the Garden Show at the Holiday Inn Walden Road was very well received and somewhat over 40 attendees expressed interest in Golden Triangle Audubon. These potential members will receive the next three issues of the *Brown Pelican* and are hereby invited to attend an upcoming membership meeting and/or field trip.

Check our Web Site!

Jeff Pittman has done a splendid job in overhauling and expanding our web site. The URL is www.goldentriangleaudubon.org. Plans are afoot to eventually include access to the database of local bird sightings that we have amassed over the last eight years or so. Jeff would also welcome any contributions from members, especially any photographs that we might use for a period. Jeff is particularly interested in photos that might replace the Black Skimmer photograph currently on the home page. If these are already in electronic format, send them to Jeff at Geojeff@swbell.net. We can arrange to scan prints or slides. Quite often, the editor has supplementary material that won't fit in the Newsletter, and in future we will put the complete items onto the web site. We are committed to keeping the printed *Brown Pelican* indefinitely, but if you would like us to stop sending the *Brown Pelican* by mail and merely send you an email each time we put a new issue on the web site, we can do that. Send a email address with your request to whittleja@hal.lamar.edu.

Bird Sightings – February 2003

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: Many of our regular observers seemingly take a break from birding in February. One of the better birding locations in our area in February is Cattail Marsh in Tyrrell Park. This year, the vegetation in the cells near the gate had decayed by then, while hunting pressure elsewhere had driven many ducks into that no hunting area. Very few reports from the coast were received this month!

LOON, Common	JEF 1 rep(3)
GREBE, Pied-billed	JEF 4 reps(16)
PELICAN, American White	JEF 3 reps(127); ORA 1 rep(6)
PELICAN, Brown	JEF-TX87 2/15(11) JAW; JEF-TXPT 2/15(1) JAW; JEF-PI 2/16(9) MW; JEF-SRSP 2/24(20) AM
CORMORANT, Neotropic	JEF-TX87 2/15(1) JAW; JEF-PI 2/16(1) MW; JEF 2/23(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 2/24(17) AM
CORMORANT, Double-crested	JEF 3 reps(47)
CORMORANT, Species	JEF 1 rep(8)
ANHINGA	JEF 2/2(1) JAW
HERON, Great Blue	JEF 6 reps(24); ORA 1 rep(1)
EGRET, Great	JEF 6 reps(49)
EGRET, Snowy	JEF 6 reps(45)
HERON, Tricolored	JEF 2 reps(2)
EGRET, Cattle	JEF 1 rep(6)
HERON, Green	JEF 2/15(1) JAW
IBIS, White-faced	JEF-TP 2/1(50) JAW
SPOONBILL, Roseate	JEF-PI 2/16(1) MW; JEF 2/23(2) JAW
VULTURE, Black	HAI 1 rep(9); JEF 3 reps(9)
VULTURE, Turkey	HAI 1 rep(7); JEF 4 reps(34)
GADWALL	JEF 3 reps(302)
WIGEON, American	JEF 1 rep(6)
MALLARD	JEF 1 rep(4)
DUCK, Mottled	JEF-PI 2/16(3) MW; JEF 2/23(2) JAW
TEAL, Blue-winged	JEF 2 rep(153)
SHOVELER, Northern	JEF 3 reps(715)
PINTAIL, Northern	JEF 2 reps(50)
TEAL, Green-winged	JEF 2 reps(1000)
DUCK, Ring-necked	JEF 2 reps(400)
SCAUP, Greater	JEF-TP 2/1(3) JAW; JEF-TP 2/23(2) JAW; JEF-SRSP 2/24(14) AM
SCAUP, Lesser	JEF 3 reps(325)
SCAUP species	JEF 1 rep(630)
BUFFLEHEAD	JEF 2 reps(15)
MERGANSER, Red-breasted	JEF-SRSP 2/24(55) AM;
DUCK, Ruddy	JEF 2 reps(29)
OSPREY	JEF-TP 2/1(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 2/15(2) JAW
KITE, White-tailed	JEF 3 reps(6)
HARRIER, Northern	JEF 4 reps(21)
HAWK, Red-shouldered	JEF 1 rep(2)
HAWK, Red-tailed	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 5 reps(47)
CARACARA, Crested	JEF 2/2(2) JAW
KESTREL, American	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 5 reps(35)
MERLIN	JEF 2/1(1) JAW; JEF-TXPT 2/15(1) JAW; JEF-SW 2/24(1) AM
RAIL, Clapper	JEF 1 rep(4)
MOORHEN, Common	JEF 1 rep(8)
COOT, American	JEF 3 reps(2022)
PLOVER, Black-bellied	JEF-SRSP 2/24(23) AM
KILLDEER	JEF 8 reps(153)
STILT, Black-necked	JEF 4 reps(59)
YELLOWLEGS, Greater	JEF 2 reps(49)
YELLOWLEGS, Lesser	JEF 2 reps(11)
WILLET	JEF 1 rep(2)
SANDPIPER, Spotted	JEF-TXPT 2/15(1) JAW; JEF-PI 2/16(2) MW
SANDERLING	JEF 1 rep(85)

DUNLIN	JEF 1 rep(3)
SANDPIPER, Stilt	JEF 2/1(1) JAW
DOWITCHER, Long-billed	JEF 1 rep(600)
SNIPE, Wilson's	JEF 2 reps(15)
JAEGER, Parasitic (?)	JEF-SRSP 2/24(1) AM
GULL, Laughing	JEF 6 reps(390)
GULL, Bonaparte's	JEF 3 reps(62)
GULL, Ring-billed	JEF 5 reps(1044)
GULL, Herring	JEF 3 reps(21)
TERN, Caspian	JEF 2 rep(4); ORA 1 rep(1)
TERN, Royal	JEF 1 rep(23)
TERN, Forster's	JEF 2 rep(17)
TERN, Common	JEF-SRSP 2/24(1) AM
DOVE, Rock	HAI 1 rep(4); JEF 4 reps(18); ORA 1 rep(40)
COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian	JEF 2/14(2) JAW; JEF-TX87 2/15(10) JAW; JEF 2/27(2) JAW; JEF 2/28(2) JAW; ORA 2/16(1) MW
DOVE, White-winged	JEF-NEDR 2/12(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/15(1) JAW; JEF 2/27(1) JAW
DOVE, Mourning	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 7 reps(144); ORA 2 reps(4)
OWL, Great Horned	JEF-SW 2/24(1) AM
HUMMINGBIRD, Black-chinned	JEF-NEDR 2/4(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/5(1) JAW
HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous	JEF-NEDR 2/28(1) JFW
HUMMINGBIRD, Selasphorus	JEF-NEDR 2/1(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/2(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/3(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/4(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/15(1) JAW
HUMMINGBIRD species	JEF-NEDR 2/6(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/12(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/16(1) MW
KINGFISHER, Belted	JEF 5 reps(19)
WOODPECKER, Red-bellied	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 2 reps(3); ORA 1 rep(2)
SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 1 rep(1)
WOODPECKER, Downy	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 5 reps(6)
FLICKER, Northern	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 3 reps(3)
WOODPECKER, Pileated	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 1 rep(1); ORA 1 rep(1)
PHOEBE, Eastern	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 4 reps(24)
FLYCATCHER, Vermilion	JEF 2/1(1) JAW
SHRIKE, Loggerhead	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 5 reps(69)
JAY, Blue	HAI 1 rep(3); JEF 3 reps(6); ORA 1 rep(2)
CROW, American	HAI 1 rep(31); JEF 2 reps(21)
CROW, Fish	JEF-TP 2/1(183) JAW; JEF 2/2(6) JAW
CROW, species	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 3 reps(8)
MARTIN, Purple	JEF-TP 2/23(50) JAW; JEF-SRSP 2/24(4) AM
SWALLOW, Tree	JEF 2/2(3) JAW; JEF-PI 2/16(70) MW; JEF-TP 2/23(30) JAW; ORA 2/16(100) MW
CHICKADEE, Carolina	HAI 1 rep(6); JEF 2 reps(3); ORA 1 rep(2)
TITMOUSE, Tufted	HAI 1 rep(4); JEF 1 rep(1); ORA 1 rep(1)
WREN, Carolina	JEF 2 reps(4)
WREN, Marsh	JEF-TP 2/23(1) JAW
KINGLET, Golden-crowned	HAI-SNDY 2/2(2) JAW; JEF-SW 2/24(9) AM
KINGLET, Ruby-crowned	HAI 1 rep(3); JEF 3 reps(18)

GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 2 rep(2)
BLUEBIRD, Eastern	HAI 1 rep(10); JEF 4 reps(46)
THRUSH, Hermit	HAI-SNDY 2/2(1) JAW
ROBIN, American	HAI 1 rep(8); JEF 12 reps(696);
ORA 2 reps(23)	
MOCKINGBIRD, Northern	HAI 1 rep(3); JEF 6 reps(112);
ORA 1 rep(1)	
THRASHER, Brown	JEF 1 rep(2)
STARLING, European	JEF 5 reps(169)
PIBIT, American	JEF 3 reps(58)
WAXWING, Cedar	JEF 5 reps(66)
SHRIKE, Loggerhead	JEF 1 rep(4)
JAY, Blue	JEF 1 rep(2)
WARBLER, Orange-crowned	JEF 2 rep(3)
WARBLER, Yellow-rumped	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 4 reps(67)
WARBLER, Pine	HAI 1 rep(13); JEF 1 rep(1)
WARBLER, Palm	JEF-TP 2/1(2) JAW
YELLOWTHROAT, Common	JEF 3 reps(6)
SPARROW, Chipping	JEF 1 rep(5)
SPARROW, Savannah	JEF 5 reps(80)
SPARROW, Nelson's Sharp-tail.	JEF 1 rep(1)
SPARROW, Song	JEF 2 reps(7)
SPARROW, Swamp	JEF 4 reps(17)
SPARROW, White-throated	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 3 reps(20); ORA
1 rep(2)	
SPARROW, White-crowned	JEF 2/1(2) JAW; JEF-TP 2/1(2)
JAW; JEF 2/2(1) JAW; JEF-TP 2/23(2) JAW	
CARDINAL, Northern	HAI 1 rep(3); JEF 5 reps(9); ORA 1
rep(12)	
BLACKBIRD, Red-winged	JEF 6 reps(1449); ORA 2
reps(207)	
MEADOWLARK, Eastern	JEF 4 reps(19)
MEADOWLARK species	JEF 2 reps(15)
BLACKBIRD, Brewer's	ORA 2/17(8) SBE
GRACKLE, Common	JEF 4 reps(79); ORA 1 rep(4)
GRACKLE, Boat-tailed	JEF 4 reps(45)
GRACKLE, Great-tailed	JEF 6 reps(225); ORA 1 rep(25)
COWBIRD, Brown-headed	JEF 1 rep(50); ORA 1 rep(1)
GOLDFINCH, American	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 5 reps(27); ORA
1 rep(6)	
SPARROW, House	JEF 3 reps(8); ORA 1 rep(6)
Number of Species	127
Number of Individuals	13783

County Abbreviations:

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

Location Codes:

BC -- Bridge City; NEDR -- Nederland; PI -- Pleasure Island, Port Arthur; SNDY -- Sandyland Sanctuary; SRSP -- Sea Rim State Park; SW -- Sabine Woods; TP -- Tyrrell Park incl. Cattail Marsh; TX87 -- Texas 87 Port Arthur-Sea Rim; TXPT -- Road to Pilot Station at Texas Point

Observer Abbreviations:

AM -- Art Mackinnon; JAW -- John Whittle; JFW -- Jan Whittle; KS -- Ken Sztraky; MHS -- Mary and Herb Stafford; MW -- Steve Mayes and John Whittle; SBE -- Sheri Bethard

Bird Alerts

Each year we remark about the probable futility of attempting to use this publication as a means of spreading news about the progress of migration! Even when we shave the deadlines, as we have this month, it will always be at least a week after we write the last word for the *Brown Pelican* before you see it. So this account is always more a historical account than a current alert. We do distribute an update from time to time by email, and we are hoping to put those updates on our website. If you are not on the email list to receive these updates but would like to, please send your email address to John Whittle at whittleja@hal.lamar.edu. We rarely send more than two messages a week.

Migration began in earnest with an unusually heavy influx of migrants late in March. A very heavy inflow on Thursday March 27 was still in the coastal areas when a strong cold front with exceptionally strong north winds behind it arrived on Friday March 28. The strong north winds persisted through Sunday March 30, and many of the migrants stayed put. The number of male Hooded Warblers in Sabine Woods was probably the highest that anyone has seen there. There were so many that estimating numbers was very difficult, but it is certain that there were in excess of 100 on Thursday and also on Sunday. The rain accompanying the front on Friday evening made observation difficult, and doubtless caused the birds to shelter. The very cold and very windy conditions on Saturday probably had a similar effect and the estimates for Thursday and Sunday may better reflect the numbers of birds present than the lower numbers reported on Friday and Saturday.

Other species present in large numbers were White-eyed Vireos, and Northern Parula Warblers, the latter mostly females. Although numbers reported varied among the days, Kentucky Warblers and Black-and-white Warblers were prominent, as were Yellow-throated Vireos and Worm-eating Warblers. Surprisingly for so early in the season, there were several well marked Northern Waterthrushes in addition to the expected Louisiana Waterthrushes. Prothonotary Warblers were present, but perhaps not in the relative numbers that would be expected in late March. Swainson's Warblers were reported as very easily observed at both Sabine Woods and the Willows at Sea Rim on Thursday, and another more reticent bird was six feet from the picnic shelter at Sabine Woods on Sunday. Yellow-throated Warblers were also noted at both locations, and made easy to see by their habit of staying in a very limited area for long periods. An Ovenbird was confirmed on Sunday, and there were reports from the other days. Both Orange-crowned and Tennessee Warblers were seen. Blue-winged Warblers were reported in small numbers.

Orchard Orioles were seen throughout the limited period, while Summer Tanagers were there Thursday and Friday, but not obvious thereafter. Great Crested Flycatchers were noted on Sunday. Wood Thrushes were seen throughout, as were a few Hermit Thrushes. One exceptionally early Swainson's Thrush was seen Sunday. Indigo Buntings were present, even if heard more than seen.

During the Field Trip on Saturday March 29, American Golden-Plovers were readily detected as they arrived at Bolivar Flats (where they are decidedly uncommon even when they are common a few hundred feet inland). A rather weakly marked Buff-breasted Sandpiper was also noted on the beach at the Flats. Well over a dozen Upland Sandpipers were noted on grassy areas along Highway 87 between the Flats and Rollover Pass.

Notes on Very Rare Species

Parasitic(?) Jaeger -- 24 February 2003 -- Art Mackinnon

I was scanning offshore at Sea Rim, watching a shrimp boat and the gulls and terns following. I saw fast flying bird come into the group and chase several gulls and a cormorant. The birds were about 1/4 mile out but in good afternoon light at 4 p.m. The Jaeger was small and slender, a very white belly with rufous on primaries.

Field Trip To Bolivar Peninsula April 29, 2003

Is it just me, or do I seem to have a knack for picking the coldest day of the month for field trips? Whatever the reason, the March Field Trip of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society saw unseasonably cold temperatures with strong winds barreling out of the north. It was under these conditions that a half dozen members still showed up to not only bird but do a little work at Bolivar Flats, the premiere shore-birding spot of the upper Texas coast.

The day started nicely with two Horned Larks walking around the beach near the parking area. A quick jaunt on to the Flats produced expected but still nice finds: Wilson's Plover, Dunlin, Herring Gull and Caspian Tern to name a few. After that it was time to get down to work. Our field trip coincided with Houston Audubon's Spring clean-up day for Bolivar Flats. Our members pitched in for a few hours to lend a needed hand picking up beer cans, old fishing line, plastic bags (lots and lots of plastic bags) and other items ranging from sunglasses to a Timex Watch (non-functioning). Picking up trash might not sound hard but try doing it in 30-40 mph winds! The hardest part was holding onto the bags and keeping them open. Even while wrestling with uncooperative trash bags and cold winds, we found opportunities to bird. A Buff-breasted Sandpiper on the beach was at an unusual site as they generally prefer grassy areas. But another known "grasspiper", the American Golden-Plover was also represented on the Flats that day so perhaps it was not so strange. Most likely, these were very tired migrants having just arrived after crossing the Gulf of Mexico. They stopped on the first bit of solid ground even if it was not their ideal habitat.

The work eventually ended but there was still birding to be done. Between the north wind and a low tide, there was more exposed beach than usual and the thousands of birds always at the Flats were very spread out. This makes birding more difficult (especially on a cold day) but the group persevered. And as always at Bolivar Flats, we were well rewarded. Dozens of endangered Piping Plovers scurried along the beach with Semipalmated and Snowy Plovers providing great diagnostic looks. Sanderlings, as usual, were present in good numbers along with Western Sandpipers near the water and Least Sandpipers farther up the beach. A few Ruddy Turnstones were noted along with many Willets. Some shorebirds normally easy to find here took some searching in these non-ideal conditions. Marbled Godwits, Long-billed Curlews and Dowitchers were seen from a great distance and the normally huge American Avocet flock was somewhat reduced and also far out on the Flats. American White Pelicans were pretty easy to see but Brown Pelicans were harder to find on this day.

Gulls and Terns certainly did not disappoint. The usual collection of Gulls including mostly Ring-billed and Laughing were easy to see. Terns were obvious and included Royal, Gull-billed, Forster's, Common and a number of Sandwich. Least Terns were present in good numbers, most just sitting on the beach in the high winds. Other non-shorebirds located at

Bolivar Flats on the trip included Barn Swallows flying just above the beach sands to avoid the worst of the winds, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows giving brief, reluctant looks when pished up and a male Red-breasted Merganser swimming and diving in the surf.

Moving on from Bolivar Flats provided some of the most interesting birds of the day. A Crested Caracara carrying nesting material flew over highway 87 just east of Rettilon Road, perhaps in search of a suitable spot to raise young. In numerous grassy areas along the road Upland Sandpipers and American Golden-Plovers were found in unusually good numbers. The Golf Course and Driving Range near Crystal Beach looks set to become an important place to check for these species in spring, while the more established location at Gregory Park did not disappoint. The birds allowed close approach by vehicles giving such good looks to all, that it was one of the trip's highlights. Flocks of Black Skimmers zoomed low over the water at Rollover Pass while Black-necked Stilts waded closer to shore. Nesting activity on the islands on the bay side of Rollover Pass had commenced, but was not yet at its peak.

A trip to the sanctuaries of High Island is always a great way to finish off any day. Boy Scout Woods provided looks at migrant songbirds like Hooded Warbler and Yellow-throated Vireo along with up close looks at a young Broad-winged Hawk perched in a still bare tree. Also located there were a nice male Ruby-throated Hummingbird and a possible LeConte's Sparrow. Smith Oaks also did well with appearances by Belted Kingfisher and Pied-billed Grebe. But of course you cannot visit Smith Oaks and not talk about their spectacular rookery. Roseate Spoonbills jostle with Great Egrets for nesting spots while Cattle Egrets look on waiting for their turn. Anhingas perch along the edge of the colony drying their wings while Turkey Vultures soar overhead. Tricolored Herons are present in incredible numbers this year spilling out of the usual rookery site to nest in small trees all around it. The rookery never disappoints and provides a great backdrop for ending a field trip. Come join us for a (hopefully) warmer trip to Sea Rim and Sabine Woods on April 12.

Trip List (BF = Bolivar Flats; HI = High Island; RP = Rollover Pass; TX87 = Texas 87 between High Island and Bolivar Flats; YBR = Yacht Basin Road). Numbers and locations of some of the commoner species may not reflect all that were seen!

Pied-billed Grebe (4 - HI); American White Pelican (100 - BF; 100 - RP); Brown Pelican (15 - BF; 20 - RP; 2 - TX87); Neotropic Cormorant (150 - HI; 6 - RP; 1 - TX87; 1 - YBR); Double-crested Cormorant (2 - BF; 20 - HI); Cormorant species (20 - TX87); Anhinga (3 - HI); Great Blue Heron (1 - BF; 1 - RP; 1 - TX87); Great Egret (1 - BF; 20 - HI; 8 - TX87; 1 - YBR); Snowy Egret (3 - BF; 100 - HI; 1 - TX87); Little Blue Heron (10 - HI; 2 - TX87); Tricolored Heron (201 - HI); Cattle Egret (2 - HI; 6 - TX87); Green Heron (1 - HI; 1 - TX87); Black-crowned Night-Heron (8 - HI); Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (2 - HI); White Ibis (7 - BF; 6 - HI; 6 - TX87); Roseate Spoonbill (102 - HI; 5 - RP; 1 - YBR); Black Vulture (4 - HI); Turkey Vulture (34 - HI); Mottled Duck (2 - TX87); Red-

breasted Merganser (1 - BF); White-tailed Kite (1 - TX87); Northern Harrier (1 - TX87); Broad-winged Hawk (1 - HI); Crested Caracara (2 - TX87); Common Moorhen (6 - HI); American Coot (2 - HI); Black-bellied Plover (50 - BF; 10 - RP); American Golden-Plover (8 - BF; 35 - TX87); Snowy Plover (7 - BF); Wilson's Plover (10 - BF); Semipalmated Plover (50 - BF); Piping Plover (150 - BF); Killdeer (2 - BF; 2 - TX87); Black-necked Stilt (1 - RP); American Avocet (200 - BF; 350 - RP); Willet (50 - BF; 20 - YBR); Spotted Sandpiper (1 - YBR); Upland Sandpiper (2 - BF; 13 - TX87); Whimbrel (1 - BF; 1 - YBR); Long-billed Curlew (7 - BF; 1 - TX87; 2 - YBR); Marbled Godwit (15 - BF); Ruddy Turnstone (8 - BF); Sanderling (200 - BF); Western Sandpiper (100 - BF); Least Sandpiper (10 - BF); Dunlin (200 - BF); Buff-breasted Sandpiper (1 - BF); Dowitcher species (15 - BF); Laughing Gull (100 - BF; 50 - RP); Ring-billed Gull (25 - BF); Herring Gull (15 - BF; 10 - RP); Gull-billed Tern (1 - BF; 1 - YBR); Caspian Tern (5 - BF); Royal Tern (50 - BF; 50 - RP); Sandwich Tern (3 - BF; 3 - RP); Common Tern (3 - BF); Forster's Tern (50 - BF; 15 - RP; 50 - YBR); Least Tern (200 - BF); Black Skimmer (100 - RP); Rock Dove (20 - TX87); Mourning Dove (5 - HI); Inca Dove (1 - HI); Ruby-throated Hummingbird (1 - HI); Belted Kingfisher (2 - HI); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (2 - HI); Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (1 - TX87); Loggerhead Shrike (1 - HI; 2 - TX87); White-eyed Vireo (12 - HI); Horned Lark (2 - BF); Purple Martin (5 - HI; 1 - TX87); Tree Swallow (50 - TX87); Barn Swallow (20 - BF; 3 - TX87); Blue Jay (3 - HI); Carolina Wren (2 - HI); House Wren (1 - HI); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (2 - HI); Northern Mockingbird (1 - HI; 1 - RP; 2 - TX87; 2 - YBR); Brown Thrasher (1 - HI); Northern Parula (2 - HI); Yellow-rumped Warbler (4 - HI); Black-and-white Warbler (2 - HI); Common Yellowthroat (1 - HI); Hooded Warbler (15 - HI); Savannah Sparrow (20 - BF); Northern Cardinal (10 - HI); Eastern Meadowlark (3 - TX87); Meadowlark species (1 - HI; 1 - TX87); Red-winged Blackbird (25 - TX87); Common Grackle (1 - HI); Great-tailed Grackle (35 - HI); House Sparrow (5 - HI)

Steve Mayes

Birdathon Sponsors Needed!

On Thursday April 24 in East Texas, Royce Pendergast and John Whittle will be participating in a birdathon to benefit Audubon Texas. (If the weather is really awful, we will postpone until April 27.)

A Birdathon is very similar to other "-athons" you may be familiar with, such as telethons, walkathons, etc. The idea is for us to get up at the crack of dawn on April 24 and make a run from the lakes area to the coast, looking for as many species of birds as can be found. (We're aiming for 150.) We intend to cover the woods and lakeshores of East Texas, and work our way south, surveying Cattail Marsh on our way to Texas Point, Sabine Woods and Sea Rim State Park.

We're looking for you to sponsor us at \$.50, \$.75 or \$1.00 (or whatever amount you choose) per bird species. A flat donation is also welcome. Please take the time to make a pledge today - your donation to our Birdathon will be earmarked to support Audubon's mission of protecting our natural heritage in Texas by supporting conservation, education and advocacy.

After the Birdathon, we'll send you an account of the day's adventure, plus a statement of how much you owe. (For example, if you pledged \$1.00 per species, and we see 150, your pledge would amount to \$150.00). Please convey your pledge to John Whittle at (409) 722-4193 or

whittleja@hal.lamar.edu or to Royce Pendergast at (409) 886-7504 or Royce@pnx.com. Checks should be made out to Audubon Texas and all contributions are tax deductible.

Election of Regionally Nominated Director of National Audubon Society

Shortly, the Board of Directors of Golden Triangle Audubon Society will be casting the Chapter's vote in the election of the Regionally Nominated Director of National Audubon Society (NAS). The Regionally Nominated Director will be among those nominated to the NAS Board for a 2004-2006 term. The Southwest Regional Director is nominated by vote of the certified Audubon chapters in Texas and Louisiana. The Candidates are John Whittle and Robert Thomas. Details and candidate statements can be found on the NAS web site at www.audubon.org/nas/board/regional/elections/southwest-election.html. Contact Steve Mayes (722-5807) or sgmayes@hotmail.com if you wish to provide input to our Board prior to it casting the Chapter's vote.

Home and Garden Show

We would like to thank those who helped make our booth at the Home and Garden Show on Saturday, March 22 a success! There were bird feeders for people to look at and to remind them to feed birds. Birding books and magazines were also displayed on the table to show people birding resources, etc. Jeannie Lanclous had created a children's game for them to name the birds. They were given prizes if they named them. We had lots of hand-outs to give to people about how to build birdfeeders, what plants to plant to attract certain birds. Everyone Seemed to like our booth and we made several contacts and heard many bird stories. We now have 41 people who signed up to receive the next two or three issues of the *Brown Pelican*. We would like to thank Jeannie and Joe Halbrook for planning and setting up our booth. We also thank the following people who manned the booth from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.: Andrea Billingsley, Bob Collier, Sarah Fezio, Sherry Gibson, John Haynes, Randy Hebert, Jean Hollingsworth, Steve Kuritz, Art Mackinnon, Steve Mayes, Lynn Otto, Needa Reed, Ken Sztraky. Thank you for working together to spread the word about Golden Triangle Audubon.

Jana Whittle

April Field Trip - Saturday April 12 Sea Rim Bird Walk

Note that the April field trip is being scheduled earlier in the month than usual on April 12, because the normal weekend for our Field Trips coincides with Easter, and the following weekend would clash with the Beach Clean Up scheduled from April 26. For the Bird Walk, meet at the Sea Rim Headquarters at 7:30 a.m. This trip is specially geared to inexperienced birders and is also very easy walking on the roadside and the boardwalk. After the walk, we normally drive the few miles to Sabine woods and continue birding there.

NATIONAL AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP FORM

Membership Form

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.

Name: _____

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Golden Triangle Audubon 7XCH8W25

Brown Pelican SUBSCRIPTION FORM

To subscribe to the Brown Pelican, please complete this form or include the information on or with your check. Mail to Golden Triangle Audubon Society, P. O. Box 1292, Nederland, Texas 77627-1292 or bring to any Membership Meeting. Subscriptions from National Audubon members with mailing addresses outside our official territory, and others wishing to subscribe are \$15 per year. Members with addresses within our official territory are asked to contribute \$15 also if they are able.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel No: _____

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	Out of service
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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