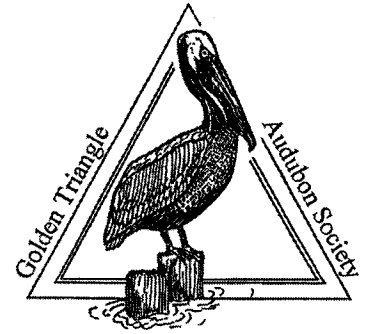


Brown Pelican

Scanned from Originals

The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 11 No. 2

February 2005

Membership Meeting
Thursday, February 17, 2005
6:30 PM, Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont

Costa Rica
Gerald Duhon and Steve Mayes

In this month's program, Gerald Duhon will discuss the logistics of birding in Costa Rica – how to get there, where to stay, how to get around, how to find the best birding areas. Steve Mayes will then talk about some of the birds that can be seen in the areas that he and Gerald visited a year or so back. These include the Monteverde cloud forest area, and the lowland Caribbean forest area around the La Selva Biological Station and the Selva Verde Lodge. The talks will be illustrated with slides of the area and the birds.

Refreshments are served at 6:30 p.m. The program begins at 7:15 p.m. As always, the public is invited.

Islands of Habitat

One of the concerns in bird conservation over the recent past has been to preserve large contiguous tracts of habitat. While it has been demonstrated that some species require such large areas, recent events in the Rio Grande Valley have highlighted the value of much smaller tracts. The Frontera Audubon Sanctuary in Weslaco cannot be much more than about five acres, yet it currently hosts an incredible array of species not normally found north of Mexico. Similarly, Allan Williams' "backyard" in Pharr, probably only two or three acres, has been home to a Blue Mockingbird for probably nearly two years, had the Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush for several months, and currently also has Crimson-collared Grosbeak(s) and a Rose-throated Becard. While both these sites are fortunate to have additional undeveloped areas adjacent and nearby, they are nevertheless in otherwise heavily urban areas. What they and other sites in the Valley have is an extensive understory of native plants, carefully planted and nurtured by their owners, to provide food and cover for birds.

Habitat favored by birds comes in many forms. Some species need the wide open prairie or foothills. Others need large unbroken areas of forest, some preferring swampy areas, others drier woodlands. Still others thrive in marshy areas. But even relatively small areas of smaller trees and underbrush are valuable too. Let us be sure we do not neglect these areas. However, they are certainly not areas one can purchase and forget. As we know from our stewardship of Sabine Woods, it takes constant attention to keep out invasive non-native species. It is not always easy to maintain an understory of native plants, but it is what we must do for the birds.

The Brown Pelican

Vol. 11, No.2 February 2005

Golden Triangle
Audubon Society

RARE BIRD ALERT AND
SOCIETY INFORMATION
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Calendar of Events

Thursday February 19, 2005.
Membership Meeting. Garden Center,
Tyrrell Park, Beaumont, 7:00 p.m.
Steve Mayes and Gerald Duhon will
talk about birding in Costa Rica.

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank Lynn Otto, Margaret Johnston and Linda Lang for bringing refreshments in December. Lu and Grady Skillern have volunteered to bring sandwiches in February, and Lynn Otto to bring deserts. **We need a volunteer to bring ice and drinks in February, and all items for the remaining 2005 meetings.** 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!

Saturday February 19. Field Trip to Lake Charlotte and Anahuac NWR.

We are going to try a somewhat different trip this month. The Lake Charlotte area has had nesting Bald Eagles for nearly 20 years. Typically, by February, the Eagles will be actively feeding young. In normal years, Lake Charlotte is also good for waterfowl, but this year has not seen many waterfowl in the coastal areas at all. After Lake Charlotte, we will proceed to Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. Generally speaking, the ducks that are here this winter have been utilizing areas where they are not shot at (do you blame them?), and the moist soil units at Anahuac have had reasonably good numbers of ducks. The meeting place will be the McDonald's at Interstate 10 (exit 813) and Highway 61 in Hankamer at 8:00 a.m. This is about 40 miles east of Beaumont. The McDonald's is on the south side (the eastbound side) of IH-10 but is easily accessed from either direction. There is also DJ's Country Store adjacent to the McDonalds.

Thursday March 17, 2005. Membership Meeting. Our speaker will be Mike Hoke of Shangri-La Gardens and Nature Center in Orange.

Saturday March 19, 2005. Field Trip to Bolivar Flats. Meet at the vehicle barrier at 8:30 a.m. From Winnie, take TX 124 south to High Island. At the shoreline, turn right (west) on TX 87 and proceed through Gilchrist and Crystal Beach until you reach the intersection where Loop 108 turns right (north). Turn left (the opposite way to Loop 108) along Rettilon Road. At the beach, if conditions permit, turn right (west) about 1/2 mile to the vehicle barrier. We will leave the vehicle barrier at about 8:45 a.m., although the group will be visually obvious on the flats should you be a few minutes later than that. The opportunity will exist to visit High Island on the way back.

Sunday March 20, 2005 (tentative). Sabine Woods Work Day. There being some conflict on every Saturday in March, we are proposing a Sunday work day. We will start about 7:30 a.m., and usually these work days do not run much beyond noon. Sabine Woods is located on Highway 87 about 4.1 miles west of the stop sign in Sabine Pass, on the north side of the highway just. We will try to provide refreshments, but bring water and insect repellent. Also bring gloves, heavy duty pruning tools, machetes. We can use riding mowers, probably one chain saw.

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.

8th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count Invites Everyone to Count Birds in America's Great Backyard

New York, NY and Ithaca, NY, January 12, 2005 – During the weekend of February 18 through 21, people across the North American continent are urged to look at the birds in their backyards and report them over the Internet as part of the Great Backyard Bird Count, one of the world's largest volunteer efforts of its kind. This count allows people to celebrate their birds, and whether counters are novices or experts, their participation is vital in helping North America's birds.

This is the eighth year of the popular event, developed and managed by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology with sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited storeowners. This year's theme, "North America's Great Backyard," was chosen as a way to celebrate the unique beauty and birds found across the continent. People are encouraged to enjoy the birds around them by going out into the "Great Backyard" during any or all of the count days and noting down of the highest numbers of each bird species they see. People then report their sightings over the Internet at www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

"We call it the Great Backyard Bird Count to make the point that anyone can participate," says John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "But really, a 'backyard' can be anywhere you happen to be; a schoolyard, a local park, the balcony of a high rise apartment, a wildlife refuge. No matter where you go in this 'Great Backyard,' you're almost certain to find birds in all their beauty. By participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count, you can help researchers better understand bird population numbers and distribution across the continent."

An important part of North America's Great Backyard is the 730 million acres of land (around one third of the land area of the United States) held in trust by Federal Agencies. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Parks Service, Department of Defense, and Bureau of Reclamation are among the stewards of lands that support significant populations of wild birds. For this year's Great Backyard Bird Count, Audubon and Cornell, along with these federal agencies, are encouraging families and individuals to visit their local national wildlife refuge, national forest, national park, and other federal wild lands, in addition to reporting the birds they see in their own backyard.

"In addition to counting the birds in your own backyard, this remarkable event gives you the opportunity to visit some of our most special places and wild lands," says Bob Perciasepe, Audubon's chief operating officer. "In this way, the Great Backyard Bird Count reminds us that North America's birds consider the whole continent to be one great big backyard; and in a sense, it is our backyard as well."

To encourage the public to enjoy their public lands, federal agencies are getting involved in the Great Backyard Bird Count by encouraging visitors in what can

be a slow period for visitation. "Although the Great Backyard Bird Count takes place during just four days in February, our public lands are important areas for birds at all times of year," Perciasepe continued. "Many act as important breeding areas, some as stop-over sites, and some as winter residences. They also serve as wonderful places for people to connect with the birds and other animals that are part of our great natural heritage."

The Great Backyard Bird Count helps everyone prepare for their trip to the backyard, whether they choose to bird only around their home or make the effort to see which birds are enjoying public lands. The web site is full of tips of all kinds, including information on bird feeding; how to use binoculars; how to make your yard bird-friendly; and on how to identify birds, especially those tricky, similar-looking species. There are even tips on how to be a bird-friendly family.

"Kids are the future caretakers of the environment upon which we all depend," says Fitzpatrick. "The Great Backyard Bird Count is a terrific way to nurture their inborn curiosity about birds and nature." Educators and parents alike will find the bibliography, vocabulary, and geography sections useful and handy, and there are suggestions on how to conduct the count with groups of children.

Researchers hope that by learning more about the birds and habitats in their own backyards, families will decide to become part of Project FeederWatch, a winterlong survey of birds that visit feeders. FeederWatch data have been instrumental in our scientific analyses of winter finch movements and Varied Thrush cycles, and have even helped researchers discover a new avian disease, mycoplasmal conjunctivitis, or House Finch eye disease. These findings were possible thanks to dedicated FeederWatchers.

"Taking part in the Great Backyard Bird Count takes as little or as much time as participants wish," says Audubon's Director of Citizen Science Paul Green. "The important thing is to just take part, count for the birds, and enjoy North America's Great Backyard." Regional editors are on hand to review sightings and to confirm unexpected species, helping as necessary with identification.

Instructions for participating can be found at www.birdsource.org/gbbc. There's no fee and no registration is required. Those who would like to participate but who aren't online can try their local library, and many Wild Birds Unlimited store owners who are online will be accepting observations made by their customers. Libraries, businesses, nature clubs, Scout troops, and other community organizations interested in promoting the GBBC or getting involved can contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at 800/ 843-2473 (outside the U.S., call 607/254-2473), 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York 14850, or the National Audubon Society at citizenscience@audubon.org or (215) 355-9588, Ext 20, Audubon Science Office, 545 Almshouse Road, Ivyland, PA 18974.

Audubon is celebrating its centennial year of protecting birds and other wildlife and the habitat that supports them. Our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in positive conservation experiences.

Bird Sightings – December 2004

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 john.whittle@lamar.edu or call (409) 880-8276 or fax to (409) 880-7977. 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: This is an interesting winter. Many of the states in the northern United States have seen incursions of large numbers of birds which often mostly stay north of the United States. These include several species of owl, redpolls and other species. As is usually the case, these incursions become evident long before the unusually cold weather pattern has become apparent. Do the birds have a sense of impending longer term weather events? To some extent, this phenomenon has manifested itself in our area, with many reports of Purple Finch and Pine Siskin. Red-and White-breasted Nuthatches and Fox Sparrow are also being seen. Purple Finch and Pine Siskin used to be seen much more often in our area in winter, even if they were never common. It has become fashionable to ascribe their wintering further north on "Global Warming." While this may be the

ultimate reason, the proximate reason is the availability of food. It seems birds come south in winter only to the extent necessary to find food.

Another feature of the winter of 2004-05 in Southeast Texas, somewhat paradoxical in view of the incursions described in the previous paragraph, has been the very low numbers of ducks. The areas right on the coast are essentially devoid of ducks, and even west Jefferson County has almost no ducks. There are ducks in a few areas which are off limits to hunters – Cattail Marsh, the south impoundment of Pleasure Island, Lost Lake in Murphree WMA, and the "Moist Soil Units" at Anahuac NWR. It is too early to tell whether duck numbers are drastically down (and the population estimates/projections were inaccurate), or whether the ducks stopped short of the coastal areas.

Although we are probably on the very periphery of the affected area, there has been an unprecedented incursion of Mexican species into south Texas this winter. We might be seeing this "effect" (whatever it may be) in the appearance of the Great Kiskadee, the Least Grebes and the Crested Caracaras. In the immediate vicinity of the Rio Grande, the issue may be the clearing of the forest and scrub south of the border, reducing the available habitat.

Locally, sightings of interest include Bald Eagles around Cattail Marsh, late Western Kingbirds and a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher near Sea Rim, and hundred of American Robins everywhere. Robins are usually present in good numbers as near as the Big Thicket, but do not always venture south of I-10 in the numbers they have this year.

WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous	JEF 12/30(3) JAW
GOOSE, White-fronted	JEF 1 rep(50)
GOOSE, Snow	JEF 4 reps(2950)
GOOSE, Ross's	JEF 12/4(1) JAW; JEF 12/19(4) JAW; JEF 12/30(1) JAW
DUCK, Wood	HAI 12/18(2) WP
GADWALL	JEF 5 reps(1412)
WIGEON, American	JEF 4 reps(13)
MALLARD	JEF 4 reps(35)
DUCK, Mottled	JEF 12/4(7) JAW; JEF 12/19(4) JAW; JEF 12/30(12) JAW; JEF-TX87 12/31(1) JAW
TEAL, Blue-winged	JEF 4 reps(645)
SHOVELER, Northern	JEF 5 reps(3515)
PINTAIL, Northern	JEF 5 reps(116)
TEAL, Green-winged	JEF 5 reps(7706)
CANVASBACK	JEF-PI 12/31(1000) JAW
DUCK, Ring-necked	JEF 4 reps(258)
SCAUP, Greater	JEF 12/4(7) JAW; JEF 12/19(1) JAW; JEF 12/27(4) JAW
SCAUP, Lesser	JEF 5 reps(1775)
BUFFLEHEAD	JEF 5 reps(72)
GOLDENEYE, Common	JEF 12/19(2) JAW
MERGANSE, Hooded	JEF 12/19(1) JAW; JEF 12/27(3) JAW
MERGANSE, Red-breasted	JEF 1 rep(27)
DUCK, Ruddy	JEF 5 reps(717)
GREBE, Least	JEF 12/4(3) JAW; JEF 12/19(2) JAW; JEF-TP 12/19(1) GD; JEF 12/27(3) JAW
GREBE, Pied-billed	JEF 5 reps(54)
GREBE, Eared	JEF 4 reps(9)
PELICAN, Amer. White	JEF 1 rep(225)
PELICAN, Brown	JEF 12/31(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 12/31(10) JAW; JEF-TXPT 12/31(3) JAW
CORMORANT, Neotropic	JEF 12/4(4) JAW; JEF 12/19(11) JAW; JEF 12/27(6) JAW; JEF 12/30(1) JAW; JEF 12/31(10) JAW; JEF-SRSP 12/31(3) JAW; JEF-TX87 12/31(15) JAW; JEF-TXPT 12/31(7) JAW
CORMORANT, Double-crested	JEF 4 reps(29); TYL 1 rep(13)
ANHINGA	JEF 12/4(1) JAW; JEF 12/26(1) JAW
HERON, Great Blue	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 7 reps(38); ORA 1 rep(4); TYL 1 rep(1)
EGRET, Great	JEF 7 reps(279); ORA 1 rep(1); TYL 1 rep(1)
EGRET, Snowy	JEF 6 reps(6227); TYL 1 rep(1)

HERON, Tricolored	JEF 3 reps(14)
EGRET, Reddish	JEF 1 rep(1)
EGRET, Cattle	JEF 5 reps(69)
HERON, Green	JEF 12/4(1) JAW
IBIS, White	JEF 12/4(123) JAW; JEF 12/19(101) JAW; JEF 12/27(1) JAW; JEF 12/30(2) JAW
IBIS, Glossy	JEF 12/27(1) JAW
IBIS, White-faced	JEF 12/4(40) JAW; JEF 12/19(1) JAW; JEF 12/26(3) JAW; JEF 12/27(25) JAW; JEF 12/30(10) JAW
IBIS, Plegadis	JEF 12/4(166) JAW; JEF-TP 12/4(20) JAW; JEF 12/19(382) JAW; JEF 12/26(200) JAW; JEF 12/27(67) JAW; JEF 12/30(94) JAW; JEF 12/31(300) JAW
SPOONBILL, Roseate	JEF 12/4(41) JAW; JEF 12/19(32) JAW; JEF 12/27(1) JAW; JEF 12/30(1) JAW; JEF 12/31(1) JAW
VULTURE, Black	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 6 reps(14); ORA 1 rep(5); TYL 2 reps(45)
VULTURE, Turkey	HAI 1 rep(7); JEF 7 reps(70); TYL 2 reps(13)
OSPREY	JEF-TX87 12/4(3) SM; JEF-TX87 12/5(1) KS
KITE, White-tailed	JEF 1 rep(1)
EAGLE, Bald	JEF 12/4(1) GD; JEF-TP 12/12(2) GD; JEF 12/19(3) JAW; JEF-TP 12/20(1) JHH; TYL 12/29(1) BCCB
HARRIER, Northern	JEF 8 reps(24)
HAWK, Sharp-shinned	JEF 2 reps(2); TYL 1 rep(1)
HAWK, Cooper's	JEF 12/19(1) JAW
HAWK, Red-shouldered	HAI 1 rep(6); JEF 5 reps(4); ORA 5 reps(9); TYL 1 rep(4)
HAWK, Swainson's	JEF 12/25(1) EC
HAWK, Red-tailed	JEF 8 reps(77); ORA 2 reps(2)
CARACARA, Crested	JEF 12/4(3) JAW; JEF-TX87 12/25(1) EC; JEF 12/26(2) JAW
KESTREL, American	JEF 8 reps(62); TYL 1 rep(1)
MERLIN	JEF 12/4(1) GD; JEF 12/4(1) JAW; JEF 12/4(1) SM
FALCON, Peregrine	JEF 12/4(1) GD; JEF-TX87 12/4(1) SM
SORA	JEF 12/27(1) JAW; JEF 12/30(1) JAW
MOORHEN, Common	JEF 3 reps(13)
COOT, American	JEF 4 reps(318)
CRANE, Sandhill	JEF 12/19(260) JAW; JEF 12/26(1100) JAW

PLOVER, Black-bellied JEF 1 rep(13)
 PLOVER, Snowy JEF-SRSP 12/31(38) JAW
 PLOVER, Semipalmated JEF 1 rep(1)
 PLOVER, Piping JEF 12/5(2) KS
 KILLDEER JEF 6 reps(174); ORA 1 rep(2);
 TYL 1 rep(4)
 STILT, Black-necked JEF 5 reps(383)
 AVOCET, American JEF 3 reps(27)
 YELLOWLEGS, Greater JEF 6 reps(80)
 YELLOWLEGS, Lesser JEF 2 reps(3)
 YELLOWLEGS species JEF 1 rep(5)
 WILLET JEF 1 rep(24)
 SANDPIPER, Spotted JEF 12/4(1) JAW
 CURLEW, Long-billed JEF 1 rep(15)
 SANDERLING JEF 1 rep(26)
 SANDPIPER, Western JEF 2 reps(10)
 SANDPIPER, Least JEF 5 reps(155)
 SANDPIPER, Stilt JEF 12/4(13) JAW; JEF 12/19(14)
 JAW; JEF 12/26(1) JAW; JEF 12/27(6) JAW; JEF 12/30(28)
 JAW
 DOWITCHER, Short-billed JEF-PI 12/31(25) JAW
 DOWITCHER, Long-billed JEF 6 reps(674)
 DOWITCHER species JEF 1 rep(10)
 SNIPE, Common JEF 2 reps(17)
 GULL, Laughing JEF 5 reps(817)
 GULL, Bonaparte's JEF 1 rep(34)
 GULL, Ring-billed JEF 4 reps(353)
 GULL, Herring JEF 1 rep(5)
 TERN, Gull-billed JEF 12/19(1) JAW
 TERN, Caspian JEF 3 reps(3)
 TERN, Royal JEF 1 rep(7)
 TERN, Forster's JEF 1 rep(50)
 DOVE, Rock JEF 5 reps(55)
 COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian JEF 12/4(32) JAW; JEF 12/19(1)
 JAW; JEF 12/26(2) JAW
 DOVE, White-winged JEF-NEDR 12/4(10) JAW; JEF-
 NEDR 12/19(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 12/25(17) JAW; JEF-NEDR
 12/31(1) JAW
 DOVE, Mourning HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 7 reps(187);
 ORA 1 rep(1); TYL 1 rep(1)
 DOVE, Inca JEF 1 rep(1); TYL 1 rep(1)
 OWL, Barn JEF-SW 12/4(2) SM; JEF-SW
 12/25(3) EC; JEF-SW 12/31(3) JAW
 SCREECH-OWL, Eastern JEF 12/18(2) GD
 OWL, Great Horned JEF-SW 12/31(1) JAW
 HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous JEF-NEDR 12/24(1) JAW; JEF-
 NEDR 12/25(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 12/26(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR
 12/28(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 12/30(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 12/31(1)
 JAW
 HUMMINGBIRD, *Selasphorus* JEF-NEDR 12/27(1) JAW
 KINGFISHER, Belted JEF 4 reps(23); ORA 1 rep(1); TYL
 1 rep(3)
 WOODPECKER, Red-headed TYL 12/29(2) BCCB
 WOODPECKER, Red-bellied HAI 1 rep(6); JEF 5 reps(13); ORA
 2 reps(3); TYL 1 rep(13)
 SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied HAI 1 rep(8); JEF 1 rep(1); ORA 3
 reps(3); TYL 2 reps(8)
 WOODPECKER, Downy HAI 1 rep(13); JEF 4 reps(8); TYL
 1 rep(10)
 WOODPECKER, Hairy ORA 12/1(1) SBE; ORA 12/10(2)
 SBE
 FLICKER, Northern HAI 1 rep(10); JEF 2 reps(4); TYL
 1 rep(2)
 WOODPECKER, Pileated HAI 1 rep(12); JEF 1 rep(1); ORA 1
 rep(1); TYL 1 rep(5)
 FLYCATCHER, Least JEF-SW 12/25(1) EC
 PHOEBE, Eastern HAI 1 rep(16); JEF 5 reps(64);
 ORA 2 reps(3); TYL 2 reps(9)
 FLYCATCHER, Vermillion JEF 12/4(1) JAW; JEF 12/19(2)
 JAW; JEF 12/26(1) JAW
 KINGBIRD, Western JEF-TX87 12/5(4) KS
 FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tailed JEF-TX87 12/5(1) KS
 SHRIKE, Loggerhead JEF 5 reps(87); ORA 1 rep(3)
 VIREO, White-eyed HAI 12/18(2) WP; JEF 12/4(1) JAW
 VIREO, Blue-headed HAI 1 rep(4); JEF 3 reps(3); TYL 1
 rep(1)

JAY, Blue HAI 1 rep(12); JEF 5 reps(16);
 ORA 3 reps(5); TYL 1 rep(7)
 CROW, American HAI 1 rep(24); JEF 3 reps(4); TYL
 2 reps(6)
 SWALLOW, Tree JEF 12/4(57) JAW; JEF 12/19(219)
 JAW; JEF-NEDR 12/25(3) JAW; JEF 12/26(6) JAW; JEF
 12/27(92) JAW; JEF 12/30(18) JAW
 SWALLOW species JEF 1 rep(8)
 CHICKADEE, Carolina HAI 1 rep(13); JEF 4 reps(6); ORA
 5 reps(9); TYL 2 reps(15)
 TITMOUSE, Tufted HAI 1 rep(23); ORA 4 reps(5); TYL
 1 rep(17)
 NUTHATCH, Red-breasted HAI 12/1(1) SG; HAI 12/2(1) SG;
 HAI 12/3(1) SG; HAI 12/4(1) SG; HAI 12/5(1) SG
 NUTHATCH, Brown-headed HAI 12/18(8) WP
 WREN, Carolina HAI 1 rep(17); JEF 6 reps(15); TYL
 2 reps(14)
 WREN, House HAI 12/18(2) WP; JEF-SW 12/4(2)
 SM; JEF 12/27(1) JAW; JEF-SW 12/31(2) JAW; TYL 12/18(2)
 WP; TYL 12/29(3) BCCB
 WREN, Marsh JEF 12/4(1) JAW
 KINGLET, Ruby-crowned HAI 1 rep(41); JEF 10 reps(26);
 TYL 1 rep(18)
 GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray JEF 7 reps(16); TYL 1 rep(1)
 BLUEBIRD, Eastern HAI 1 rep(6); JEF 6 reps(47); ORA
 4 reps(41); TYL 2 reps(17)
 THRUSH, Hermit HAI 12/18(15) WP; ORA 12/10(1)
 SBE; TYL 12/29(1) BCCB
 ROBIN, American HAI 12/18(40) WP; JEF-SW
 12/4(5) SM; JEF 12/18(15) GD; JEF 12/19(33) JAW; JEF-
 NEDR 12/22(200) JAW; JEF-NEDR 12/24(50) JAW; JEF-NEDR
 12/25(2) JAW; JEF 12/26(14) JAW; JEF 12/27(16) JAW; JEF
 12/30(52) JAW; JEF-NEDR 12/31(20) JAW; JEF-PI 12/31(1)
 JAW; JEF-SRSP 12/31(2) JAW; JEF-SW 12/31(50) JAW; ORA
 12/22(1) SBE; TYL 12/18(6) WP; TYL 12/29(43) BCCB
 CATBIRD, Gray JEF-SW 12/4(2) SM; JEF-SW
 12/25(2) EC; TYL 12/29(1) BCCB
 MOCKINGBIRD, Northern HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 7 reps(86); ORA
 4 reps(9); TYL 2 reps(9)
 THRASHER, Brown JEF 2 reps(5); ORA 1 rep(1); TYL
 1 rep(3)
 STARLING, European JEF 6 reps(227); TYL 1 rep(2)
 PIPIT, American JEF 4 reps(75)
 WAXWING, Cedar HAI 1 rep(53); JEF 4 reps(111);
 TYL 1 rep(12)
 WARBLER, Orange-crowned HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 6 reps(13); TYL
 1 rep(3)
 WARBLER, Magnolia JEF-SW 12/25(1) EC
 WARBLER, Yellow-rumped HAI 1 rep(46); JEF 8 reps(103);
 ORA 5 reps(70); TYL 2 reps(53)
 WARBLER, Pine HAI 1 rep(17); JEF 6 reps(29);
 ORA 2 reps(3); TYL 2 reps(31)
 WARBLER, Prairie JEF-SW 12/25(1) EC
 WARBLER, Palm JEF 12/30(1) JAW; JEF-TXPT
 12/31(1) JAW
 YELLOWTHROAT, Common JEF 6 reps(20)
 WARBLER, Wilson's HAI 12/22(1) JM
 TOWHEE, Eastern JEF-SW 12/31(1) JAW
 SPARROW, Bachman's HAI 12/18(1) WP
 SPARROW, Chipping HAI 1 rep(3); ORA 1 rep(2); TYL 2
 reps(31)
 SPARROW, Field JEF-SW 12/4(4) SM
 SPARROW, Vesper JEF 12/18(3) GD; JEF 12/26(1)
 JAW
 SPARROW, Savannah JEF 6 reps(212)
 SPARROW, Nelson's Sharp-tail. JEF 1 rep(1)
 SPARROW, Seaside JEF 1 rep(1)
 SPARROW, Fox JEF-SW 12/31(1) JAW; ORA
 12/1(0) SBE
 SPARROW, Song HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 4 reps(12); TYL
 1 rep(3)
 SPARROW, Lincoln's TYL 12/29(2) BCCB
 SPARROW, Swamp JEF 6 reps(42); TYL 1 rep(8)
 SPARROW, White-throated JEF 4 reps(30); TYL 1 rep(10)
 SPARROW, White-crowned JEF 12/4(1) GD; JEF 12/19(11)
 JAW

JUNCO, Dark-eyed	ORA 1 rep(4)
CARDINAL, Northern	HAI 1 rep(13); JEF 3 reps(6); ORA
5 reps(35); TYL 1 rep(21)	
BUNTING, Painted	JEF-SW 12/4(1) SM
BLACKBIRD, Red-winged	JEF 6 reps(3372); ORA 4
reps(530); TYL 1 rep(125)	
MEADOWLARK, Eastern	JEF 3 reps(15)
MEADOWLARK species	JEF 3 reps(31)
BLACKBIRD, Brewer's	JEF 12/19(4) JAW; JEF 12/26(1)
JAW	
GRACKLE, Common	JEF 4 reps(163); ORA 2 reps(44)
GRACKLE, Boat-tailed	JEF 2 reps(27)
GRACKLE, Great-tailed	JEF 6 reps(119); ORA 1 rep(17)
GRACKLE, Gt./Boat tailed	JEF 1 rep(20)
COWBIRD, Brown-headed	JEF 2 reps(21)
BLACKBIRD species	JEF 1 rep(3065)
FINCH, House	JEF-NEDR 12/25(1) JAW; ORA
12/1(8) SBE; ORA 12/10(8) SBE; ORA 12/16(5) SBE; ORA	
12/20(12) SBE; ORA 12/22(14) SBE	
SISKIN, Pine	HAI 12/22(1) JM; TYL 12/29(2)
BCCB	
GOLDFINCH, American	HAI 1 rep(19); JEF 10 reps(127);
ORA 5 reps(26); TYL 1 rep(102)	
SPARROW, House	JEF 4 reps(39); TYL 1 rep(2)
Number of Species	170
Number of Individuals	45571

County Abbreviations:

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

Location Codes:

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

Observer Abbreviations

BCCB - Beech Creek CBC; EC - Eric Carpenter; GD - Gerald Duhon; JAW - John Whittle; JHH - John H. Haynes; JM - John Mariana; KS - Ken Sztraky; RHJ - Rose Ann and Harrison Jordan; SBE - Sheri Bethard; SG - Sherry Gibson; SM - Steve Mayes; WP - John Whittle and Jeff Pittman

Bird Alerts

For a second consecutive winter, a very cooperative male Vermilion Flycatcher is in residence along the driveway of 4815 Thompson Road near Nome in west Jefferson County.

The homeowner, Mr. Victor ("Punkee") Schroeder and his wife Debbie are very proud of the bird, and have graciously contacted us and invited anyone who wants to see the bird and/or photograph it to stop by. He has invited anyone who goes to see the bird to stop and visit with them. The bird is very easy to find, is seemingly always there, and allows close approach. The Schroeder's telephone number is 409-253-2450.

Thompson Road runs south from US 90 just east of Nome. From the intersection of FM365/TX326 and US 90 (the main intersection in Nome), proceed east towards Beaumont. Thompson Road is the first public road to the right (south) and is about a mile from the intersection. When traveling on US 90, the turnoff is partially hidden by trees, so watch carefully. There is a crossover on US 90, so it can be accessed from the westbound lanes also. 4815 is a little more than a mile down Thompson Road, and is the first house on the left after crossing the LNVA Canal. The driveway is lined on both sides by oak trees.

Thompson Road is well worth birding all the way from US90 to its end at Mason Road. Sparrows, including White-

crowned, can usually be found in the trees and hedges along the road. Last year, and once this year, a female Vermilion Flycatcher was in the same general area as the male.

Other birds of interest locally have included two orioles found by Gerald Duhon frequenting the area around the recreation center (the white brick building at the beginning of the loop road) in Tyrrell Park in Beaumont. The consensus is that one is a first year male Bullock's Oriole, while the other may be a first year male Baltimore, or perhaps a Baltimore/Bullock's hybrid.

Gerald also found two young Swainson's Hawks in west Jefferson County in mid January in the vicinity of the intersection of South China Road and FM365. Swainson's Hawks normally winter in Argentina!

Champion Lake Reopens

After 6 months of being closed for repair of the 3,500 foot levee, Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge's Champion Lake is now open to public use. The Champion Lake Public Use Area is located at the end of CR 417, east of FM 1409, 11 miles south of Dayton, TX. Parking is now limited to the paved parking spots near the boat ramp or up the hill away from the steep sided new levee. Fishing, waterfowl hunting (refuge hunt permit required), bird watching, and a levee trail are available. Boating is permitted but you must use a 10 horse power or less motor. There is also a hummingbird/butterfly garden with trail at the top of the hill. It is open sunrise to sunset all year round. Admission is free. Call the refuge office at 936/336-9786 for information on rules and regulations.

Adams Bayou Trash-Off Saturday February 26, 2005

The Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center in Orange is sponsoring a clean up of the Adam's Bayou watershed from IH-10 south. Participating organizations are asked to provide a team of volunteers. First we need a volunteer to act as team leader. Then we need volunteers to be part of the team. The team leader will need to be available for a 7:00 a.m. breakfast meeting while the other participants will meet at Orange Lions Park at 8:00 a.m. The trash removal will last approximately three hours. Shangri La will provide pizza lunch and will take care of disposal of the trash collected. Anyone interested, please contact John Whittle (john.whittle@lamar.edu or 409-722-4193) for information on how to contact Shangri La.



Earth Share of Texas represents the Audubon Foundation of Texas and the National Audubon Society in payroll deduction plans for charitable giving. For information, call 1-800-GREENTX or email estx@earthshare-texas.org.

Earth Share
OF TEXAS

Field Trip to West Harris County 22 January 2005

The Katy Prairie is one of the most productive birding areas on the upper Texas coast and, unfortunately also one of the most endangered. It seems like there is less prairie and more Houston every year. Though it may be somewhat depressing for the birder, the great birds populating the still rural and wild areas of the prairie can quickly improve the mood. With this in mind, eleven birders from the Golden Triangle Audubon Society made their yearly pilgrimage to the Katy Prairie.

Bear Creek Park is a terrific spot to start a birding day so this was the first stop. A bit of woodland mixed with wetland (and golf course), Bear Creek Park reminded the Golden Triangle birders somewhat of our own Tyrrell Park and both spots produce good birds year after year. Several Red-headed Woodpeckers were a great sight and adding Pileated, Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers along with Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Northern Flicker made for a clean sweep of the more common area woodpeckers. Two Crested Caracaras were an unusual sight in the wooded park but were just the first of several caracaras for the day. A Merlin gave the group scope filling looks while perched in a tree. Typical eastern woodland birds like Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse and Pine Warbler were easily seen. Also seen were Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. The group "dipped" (birding lingo for missing an anticipated species sighting) on Red-breasted Nuthatch and Rusty Blackbird but thanks to help from Houston area birder Jim Hinson, three female Purple Finches made up for the misses.

The Katy Prairie region of western Harris County and Waller County hosts thousands of waterfowl in winter. These birds are always a hit for birders and provided many nice views on the day. The number of ducks seemed a bit down from previous years but great looks at Mallard, American Wigeon, hundreds of Northern Pintail along with Northern Shoveler, Blue-winged Teal and Mottled Duck were still nice to see. Normally, large numbers of geese are seen feeding in fields on the Katy Prairie. This was not the case on this trip. Luckily, birds flying over provided plenty of Canada and White-fronted Geese along with thousands of Snow Geese.

Raptors also put on a great show in this area with some species that are hard to find in the Golden Triangle relatively common. Crested Caracaras were seen throughout the day, as were Red-tailed Hawks and American Kestrels. White-tailed Hawks, a beautiful species restricted in the U.S. to the south Texas and Texas coastal prairie regions, gave numerous great looks. A pair of these raptors following a tractor as it plowed a field gave especially lengthy looks. The raptor highlight of the day would have to be the adult Bald Eagle seen flying over a flooded field. The majestic bird spent several minutes circling the field and then started making numerous dives toward the surface, pulling up just short each time. It was obvious that this bird was hunting and some poor creature was locked in its sights. Eventually, the attacks paid off and the Bald Eagle swept up with some feathered creature (possibly an American Coot) in its talons. The eagle retired to a nearby pine tree to enjoy its meal and gave more great looks to the group.

Sparrows are another focus of this trip. Savannah, Vesper, Swamp and White-throated Sparrows were all recorded on the day but the windy conditions which accompanied the passage of a strong cold front made looking for these small birds difficult and overall numbers were down from previous trips. An intriguing bird was a possible Grasshopper Sparrow that gave the birders a quick look late in the day and then disappeared, as this species is often known to do. Much more cooperative were the numerous Harris's Sparrows seen on the day. This attractive sparrow, uncommon on the Texas coast, has been a hit or miss bird for past field trips but it was seen in some numbers on this trip.

There were numerous other excellent sightings on the day like Vermillion Flycatcher, Sandhill Crane, Northern Bobwhite and a Coyote standing in a grassy field. There were also some birds previously reported in the area that were missed, such as Couch's Kingbird, Short-eared Owl and Great Kiskadee. But enjoying the wildlife that is still abundant on the Katy Prairie makes one realize how lucky upper Texas coast birders are to still have this magnificent area. Hopefully, the Katy Prairie will remain with us for years to come so that future generations of birders (and birds) can enjoy it as much as we.

The following species were recorded on trip:

Greater White-fronted Goose (324); Snow Goose (5026); Canada Goose (30); Gadwall (35); American Wigeon (2); Mallard (24); Mottled Duck (8); Blue-winged Teal (51); Northern Shoveler (220); Northern Pintail (570); Green-winged Teal (25); Lesser Scaup (35); Northern Bobwhite (4); Pied-billed Grebe (3); American White Pelican (6); Double-crested Cormorant (1); Cormorant species (25); Great Blue Heron (3); Great Egret (38); Snowy Egret (10); Cattle Egret (1); White Ibis (10); Plegadis species Ibis (56); Black Vulture (16); Turkey Vulture (26); Bald Eagle (1); Northern Harrier (13); Sharp-shinned Hawk (1); Cooper's Hawk (5); White-tailed Hawk (8); Red-tailed Hawk (20); Crested Caracara (7); American Kestrel (10); Merlin (1); American Coot (150); Sandhill Crane (3); Killdeer (68); Greater Yellowlegs (12); Lesser Yellowlegs (30); Yellowlegs species (1); Long-billed Curlew (2); Common Snipe (3); Rock Dove (8); Eurasian Collared-Dove (2); Mourning Dove (9); Belted Kingfisher (1); Red-headed Woodpecker (3); Red-bellied Woodpecker (5); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (3); Downy Woodpecker (2); Northern Flicker (2); Pileated Woodpecker (1); Eastern Phoebe (4); Vermilion Flycatcher (2); Loggerhead Shrike (14); Blue-headed Vireo (1); Blue Jay (6); American Crow (6); Carolina Chickadee (15); Tufted Titmouse (6); Carolina Wren (1); House Wren (2); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (8); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (1); Eastern Bluebird (15); American Robin (409); Northern Mockingbird (14); European Starling (37); American Pipit (8); Cedar Waxwing (165); Orange-crowned Warbler (1); Yellow-rumped Warbler (11); Pine Warbler (16); Vesper Sparrow (1); Savannah Sparrow (22); Grasshopper Sparrow (1); Swamp Sparrow (3); White-throated Sparrow (1); Harris's Sparrow (12); Northern Cardinal (4); Red-winged Blackbird (345); Eastern Meadowlark (13); Meadowlark species (13); Brewer's Blackbird (523); Common Grackle (211); Great-tailed Grackle (11); Brown-headed Cowbird (103); Purple Finch (3); American Goldfinch (7); House Sparrow (7); 90 species.

Steve Mayes

NATIONAL AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP FORM

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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) 728-6957
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	(956) 584-2731
San Antonio	(210) 308-6788
Waco	(254) 299-8175
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