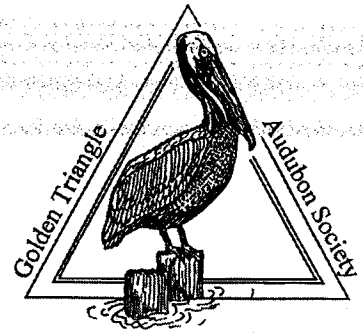


Brown Pelican

Scanned from Originals

The Brown

Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 11 No. 12

December 2005

**Sea Rim State Park Christmas Bird Count
Monday January 2, 2006
Meet in Sabine Pass at 7:00 a.m.**

at the entrance to Sabine Pass Battleground State Historical Park. From Port Arthur go south on Texas 87 to the four-way stop in Sabine Pass. Proceed straight ahead on FM3322 for just under a mile. Unfortunately, the staff are not optimistic that the park will have reopened by then, so it will probably be necessary to park on First Street, 100 yards further down.

Countdown dinner at 6:00 p.m., location to be confirmed.

Please contact John Whittle 409-722-4193 (H), 409-880-8276 (W) or john.whittle@lamar.edu and let us know you plan to attend.

**Orange County Christmas Bird Count
Sunday January 1, 2006
Meet in Orange at 7:15 a.m.**

at the Service Station at the intersection of Highway 105 and FM1442.

Please contact Ken Sztraky 409-385-2835 (H) or kens@ih2000.net

Please join us for what we hope will be two enjoyable birding days. All are invited, even if you are not an experienced birder or are only able to bird for part of the day. Feeder watchers are welcome to participate. Let us know in advance and we will find a suitable group for you to join. The more pairs of eyes in a group, the more birds will be seen.

Other local counts which will welcome your participation include the Bolivar Peninsula Count on Thursday December 22 (contact Bill Graber 409-866-5452), the Turkey Creek Count (in the Big Thicket north of Kountze) on December 28 (contact Merle King, Big Thicket NP at 409-951-6725 or Merle_King@nps.gov), the Beech Creek Count (in the Steinhagen Lake area) on December 30 (contact Merle King).

The Brown Pelican

Vol. 11, No.12 Dec 2005

Golden Triangle
Audubon Society

RARE BIRD ALERT AND
SOCIETY INFORMATION
TELEPHONE NUMBER
(409) 728-6957 (728-OWLS)

www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

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3015 Nashville Ave.

Nederland, TX 77627-6749

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P. O. Box 1292, Nederland,
Texas 77627-1292

Calendar of Events

Thursday December 22. Bolivar Peninsula Christmas Bird Count. Contact Bill Graber, 409-866-5452.

Wednesday December 28. Turkey Creek Christmas Bird Count. Meet at 6:30 a.m. at the Big Thicket NP Visitor Center, 8 miles north of Kountze on US 69. Contact Merle King for more details 409-951-6725 or Merle_King@nps.gov

Friday December 30. Beech Creek Christmas Bird Count. Meet at 6:30 a.m. at the Corps of Engineers Picnic Area immediately north of Town Bluff on FM92 (just north of the intersection with FM1746). Contact Merle King for more details 409-951-6725 or Merle_King@nps.gov

Sunday January 1, 2006. Orange County Christmas Bird Count. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Convenience Store at the intersection of FM1442 and FM105 in Orange County. Contact Ken Sztraky at 409-385-2835 or kens@ih2000.net for more details.

Monday January 2, 2006. Sea Rim State Park Christmas Bird Count. Meet at the entrance to the Sabine Pass Battleground State Historical Park on FM3322, 1 mile south of the stop sign in Sabine Pass. Be aware that the park will probably not be open, and public toilet facilities in Sabine Pass may be very hard to find. Location of the countdown dinner to be determined. Contact John Whittle, 409-722-4193 or john.whittle@lamar.edu.

Wednesday January 4, 2006 Johnson's Bayou Christmas Bird Count. A final decision on whether this count can reasonably be conducted will necessarily have to wait until nearer the time, as conditions improve in Johnson's Bayou. Contact Ken Sztraky at 409-385-2835 or kens@ih2000.net for more details.

Thursday January 19. Membership Meeting. Margaret Pickell of Wildlife Rehab and Education will be the featured speaker. This talk was originally scheduled for September, but postponed on account of Katrina.

Saturday January 21. Field Trip to West Harris County. This has become one of our most popular field trips. Houston is rapidly advancing towards the heart of this excellent birding area, with its wintering waterfowl, sparrows (including Fox) and raptors (including Caracara and Bald Eagle). The meeting place will be confirmed in the next issue, but likely will be as in previous years: 7:30 a.m. at the Randall's Supermarket on the northeast corner of Barker-Cypress Road and Clay Road, west of Houston. To reach this location, take IH-10 west through Houston and across Loop 610 on the west side to Barker-Cypress Road – exit 748. This exit is 15 miles west of Loop 610, is beyond Beltway 8 and just beyond Highway 6. Turn right (north) on Barker Cypress and proceed just under three miles to the Intersection with Clay. The Randall's parking lot can be entered from Barker-Cypress immediately north of the intersection. Please be sure to check with Steve Mayes at the Membership Meeting on January 19 or check the web-site at www.goldentriangleaudubon.org or call Steve Mayes at 722-5807 two or three days before to confirm details of both date and meeting place. Although it is a two and one-half hour drive from the Golden Triangle, this has been a very popular trip in past years.

The meeting place is about 105 miles from Beaumont (IH-10 and College St.), and the travel time at that hour of the morning is a little under 2 1/2 hours.

Car pooling from Beaumont is desirable. The fewer cars we have in the rural areas of west Harris County, the better. Maps and the opportunity to arrange car pooling will be available at the January Membership meeting on Thursday January 19.

Should you be late, the plan is to first proceed to Bear Creek Park. We will probably enter the park by turning south off Clay Road, just east of the golf course.



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.

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank all those who contributed to the Pot Luck dinner at the November meeting. We now **need volunteers to bring all items for January and all later 2006 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 far in advance 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, 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.

Bird Alert

Lingering warblers and overshooting winter residents were seen in good numbers in mid-November, but were less obvious towards the end of the month, although a small flock of Chipping Sparrows was still present at Sabine Woods, and Golden-crowned Kinglets were also still present foraging very near the ground. The Brown Creepers seen at both Sabine Woods and the Willows at Sea Rim had apparently retreated back north by the end of the month! However, it is always possible that the male Prairie Warbler and the female Magnolia Warbler seen during November in Sabine Woods are wintering birds, and

may both be the same birds that wintered there last year.

A Burrowing Owl has taken up residence at the entrance McFaddin NWR. To locate this bird, park just inside the refuge gate, well off the road, and walk on the levee to your right to the two "Area Closed" signs. Look towards the gate in the chain link fence, then down to a pile of wooden pallets (mats) in to the left and in front of the gate. The owl uses the spaces under the pallets as his "burrow," and can easily hide.

On November 27, Sandhill Cranes (estimated 230 birds) were still using fields half way between League Road and FM1406, south of Willis Road (an area without any public roads). They can best be seen and heard as they fly or viewed at a distance from Willis Road, east of FM1406. Also in west Jefferson County, two male Vermilion Flycatchers are back again this year at the driveway to 4815 Thompson Road (home of Mr. Victor ("Punkee") Schroeder and his wife Debbie). Thompson Road runs south from US90 to Mason Road. The location is about a mile south of US 90, just past the bridge over the LNVA canal. The birds use the fence wires of the driveway, usually the south side, but check a little further down Thompson Road in they are not visible on the fence. This is also shaping up as a fairly good sparrow winter, so check the road edges and brush piles while you are out there. Thompson Road is one of the better places to look for them.

Cattail Marsh had many ducks in mid November -- it's Duck Season, and the ducks know all the places off-limits to hunting! Species present were (in approximate order of abundance) Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, Lesser Scaup, Ruddy Duck, Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Greater Scaup, Mallard, Mottled Duck, Redhead, Wood Duck, and Canvasback. The best cells were Cells 1 for the diving species and Cell 4 for the dabbling species, but rains at the end of November have likely resulted in deeper water in many cells. (It is interesting to note that a hunter killed a Long-tailed Duck at McFaddin NWR on November 19.)

Encouraging at Cattail Marsh on Sunday was a flock of about 50

American Pipits along the banks of the levee of cell 4 next to Hillebrandt Bayou. The sparrow habitat at Cattail Marsh is "so-so" this year -- the levee banks were mowed just a little too late (or perhaps we just didn't get enough rain this fall), but there are Savannah and Swamp Sparrows. At the present time, there is too much water in all of the cells for there to be any shorebirds. Even the Black-necked Stilts, and there were several hundred there a week or so ago, have moved elsewhere.

Note that these Alerts are distributed by email to those who want to be on the email list and all are posted on the Golden Triangle Audubon Website at www.goldentriangleaudubon.org (often before they are distributed by email). Look for the links in the News Items panel on the right side of the home page.

From reports from Scott Gremel, John Haynes, Steve Mayes, Jana Whittle and the Field Trip to West Jefferson County on November 19.

John A. Whittle
November 28, 2005

Notes on Rare Species

As recorded in the Bird Sightings section on the following pages, a **Varied Thrush** was seen at the Willows at Sea Rim SP by Lynn Barber and Simone Jenion on October 22.

Lynn states that she was walking back along the east section of the boardwalk when she saw a large thrush-shaped bird fly up from the wet area beyond the boardwalk and land on an angled trunk leaning over the boardwalk about 6-7 feet from her. "For a millisecond, I thought it was a robin but it immediately appeared to be significantly chunkier, and had very orange wing bars, orange markings on its face and orange underbreast area, and was otherwise brown. It was substantially larger than all of the numerous Hermit Thrushes that were also around. Having seen numerous Varied Thrushes on the west coast (I lived in Oregon for five years), there was no doubt what this bird was. It flew from the Willows over the road [Highway 87] and out into the field, and was not seen by us again, even though we sure did try to find it."

Bird Sightings – October 2005

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: Reporting continued to be hindered by consequences of Hurricane Rita. However, winter residents appeared to have arrived in at least normal numbers as evidenced by a good showing of waterfowl, a good number of lingering Neotropical migrants (which continued into November), and a good variety of sparrows.

GOOSE, White-fronted JEF-SW 10/15(10) SM; JEF-TP 10/16(31) SM; JEF-MCFW 10/22(100) JAW; JEF-SW 10/23(12) JAW
GOOSE, Snow JEF-MCFW 10/22(100) JAW
GADWALL JEF-TP 10/16(1) SM; JEF-TP 10/23(27) JAW; JEF-TP 10/30(220) JAW
WIGEON, American JEF-TP 10/16(2) SM; JEF-TP 10/23(4) JAW
MALLARD JEF-TP 10/16(2) SM
DUCK, Mottled JEF-TP 10/16(2) SM; JEF-TP 10/23(9) JAW; JEF 10/30(15) JAW; JEF-TP 10/30(11) JAW
TEAL, Blue-winged JEF 4 reps(2713)
TEAL species JEF 1 rep(100)
SHOVELER, Northern JEF 3 reps(460)
PINTAIL, Northern JEF 3 reps(33)
TEAL, Green-winged JEF 3 reps(270)
DUCK, Ring-necked JEF-TP 10/16(1) SM; JEF-TP 10/23(2) JAW; JEF-TP 10/30(8) JAW
SCAUP, Greater JEF-TP 10/23(2) JAW
DUCK, Ruddy JEF-TP 10/23(6) JAW; JEF-TP 10/30(50) JAW
GREBE, Least JEF-TP 10/16(3) SM; JEF-TP 10/30(3) JAW
GREBE, Pied-billed JEF 3 reps(16)
PELICAN, Amer. White JEF 1 rep(2)
PELICAN, Brown JEF-TX87 10/7(10) JJW; JEF-TXPT 10/7(5) JJW; JEF-TXPT 10/8(3) KS; JEF-TX87 10/9(2) MW; JEF-TXPT 10/9(1) MW; JEF-TX87 10/11(3) JAW; JEF-TX87 10/23(4) JAW
CORMORANT, Neotropic JEF 10/7(1) JJW; JEF-PI 10/7(13) JJW; JEF-SRSP 10/7(2) JJW; JEF-TX87 10/7(14) JJW; JEF-TX87 10/9(5) MW; JEF-TX87 10/11(15) JAW; JEF-MCFW 10/22(2) JAW; JEF-TX87 10/22(10) JAW; JEF-TP 10/23(34) JAW; JEF-TX87 10/23(10) JAW; JEF-TP 10/30(11) JAW
CORMORANT, Double-crest. JEF-TXPT 10/9(7) MW; JEF-TX87 10/23(1) JAW
HERON, Great Blue JEF 5 reps(29)
EGRET, Great JEF 8 reps(63)
EGRET, Snowy JEF 7 reps(197)
HERON, Little Blue JEF 1 rep(3)
HERON, Tricolored JEF 2 reps(3)
EGRET, Cattle JEF 6 reps(143)
HERON, Green JEF-TP 10/23(1) JAW; JEF-TP 10/30(1) JAW
NIGHT-HERON, Black-cr. JEF 2 reps(16)
NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-cr. JEF-PI 10/7(1) JJW
IBIS, White HAI 1 rep(18); JEF 3 reps(101)
IBIS, Glossy JEF-TP 10/23(1) JAW
IBIS, White-faced JEF-TP 10/23(3) JAW; JEF-TP 10/30(3) JAW
IBIS, Plegadis JEF 10/4(30) JAW; JEF-TP 10/23(80) JAW; JEF-TP 10/30(36) JAW
SPOONBILL, Roseate JEF-SRSP 10/7(2) JJW; JEF-TXPT 10/7(3) JJW; JEF 10/9(1) MW; JEF-TX87 10/9(1) MW; JEF-TXPT 10/9(1) MW; JEF-TP 10/23(46) JAW; JEF-TP 10/30(8) JAW
VULTURE, Black JEF 5 reps(22)
VULTURE, Turkey JEF 8 reps(29)
OSPREY JEF-PI 10/7(1) JJW; JEF-TXPT 10/9(1) MW; JEF-BMT 10/11(1) JAW; JEF-TXPT 10/15(1) SM
KITE, White-tailed JEF 2 reps(2)
EAGLE, Bald ORA 10/6(2) KS

HARRIER, Northern JEF-PI 10/7(1) JJW; JEF-SRSP 10/7(1) JJW; JEF-SW 10/7(1) JJW; JEF-SRSP 10/9(1) MW; JEF-TX87 10/9(1) MW; JEF-TP 10/23(1) JAW; JEF 10/27(1) KS; JEF-SRSP 10/29(2) MHW; JEF 10/30(1) JAW; JEF-TP 10/30(1) JAW
HAWK, Sharp-shinned JEF 3 reps(3)
HAWK, Cooper's JEF 2 reps(4)
ACCIPITER species JEF 1 rep(1)
HAWK, Red-shouldered HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 5 reps(7)
HAWK, Broad-winged JEF 1 rep(2)
HAWK, Red-tailed JEF 5 reps(9)
KESTREL, American JEF 6 reps(11)
MERLIN JEF-SRSP 10/7(1) JJW; JEF-SRSP 10/9(1) MW; JEF-TX87 10/9(2) MW; JEF 10/27(2) KS
FALCON, Peregrine JEF 10/16(1) SM; JEF-TX87 10/23(1) JAW
RAIL, Clapper JEF 1 rep(1)
SORA JEF 1 rep(1)
MOORHEN, Common JEF 3 reps(6)
COOT, American JEF 4 reps(380)
PLOVER, Semipalmated JEF 1 rep(1)
KILLDEER JEF 4 reps(49)
STILT, Black-necked JEF 4 reps(756)
AVOCET, American JEF 6 reps(268)
YELLOWLEGS, Greater JEF 5 reps(28)
YELLOWLEGS, Lesser JEF 6 reps(24)
YELLOWLEGS species JEF 1 rep(5)
WILLET JEF 2 reps(5)
SANDPIPER, Spotted JEF 1 rep(5)
SANDPIPER, Western JEF 4 reps(126)
SANDPIPER, Peep JEF 3 reps(275)
SANDPIPER, Least JEF 3 reps(623)
DUNLIN JEF-MCFW 10/22(8) JAW; JEF-TP 10/23(4) JAW; JEF-TP 10/30(28) JAW
SANDPIPER, Stilt JEF-TP 10/16(5) SM; JEF-TP 10/23(20) JAW; JEF-TP 10/30(15) JAW
DOWITCHER, Long-billed JEF 3 reps(2965)
DOWITCHER species JEF 1 rep(50)
SNIBE, Common JEF-TP 10/30(3) JAW
PHALAROPE, Wilson's JEF-TP 10/30(2) JAW
GULL, Laughing JEF 7 reps(1415)
GULL, Franklin's JEF-TP 10/23(5) JAW; JEF-TP 10/30(3) JAW
GULL, Ring-billed JEF 3 reps(12)
TERN, Gull-billed JEF-TP 10/23(4) JAW; JEF-TP 10/30(4) JAW
TERN, Caspian JEF 3 reps(8)
TERN, Royal JEF 2 reps(7)
TERN, Forster's JEF 5 reps(42)
TERN, Black JEF-TX87 10/7(1) JJW
DOVE, Rock JEF 7 reps(43)
COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian JEF 1 rep(1)
DOVE, White-winged JEF 5 reps(19)
DOVE, Mourning JEF 9 reps(60)
DOVE, Inca JEF 3 reps(6)
CUCKOO, Yellow-billed JEF-SW 10/8(1) KS; JEF-SW 10/9(3) MW; JEF-SRSP 10/15(1) SM; JEF-SW 10/16(1) GD; JEF-SRSP 10/27(1) KS; JEF-SW 10/29(1) MHW
OWL, Barn JEF-SRSP 10/9(1) MW; JEF-SRSP 10/15(1) SM; JEF-SW 10/15(2) SM; JEF-SW 10/29(1) MHW
WILL'S-WIDOW, Chuck- JEF-SW 10/9(1) MW
WHIP-POOR-WILL, JEF-SW 10/15(1) SM

SWIFT, Chimney	JEF-NEDR 10/5(2) JAW	10/9(15) MW; JEF-SW 10/16(1) GD; JEF-SRSP 10/22(1) JAW
HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-throat	JEF-NEDR 10/4(5) JAW; JEF-NEDR 10/5(10) JAW; JEF-SW 10/8(2) KS; JEF-NEDR 10/9(2) MW; JEF-SW 10/9(25) MW; JEF-SW 10/11(5) JAW; JEF-NEDR 10/16(2) JAW; JEF-NEDR 10/17(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 10/18(2) JAW; JEF-NEDR 10/19(1) JAW	PARULA, Northern JEF-SW 10/9(2) MW; JEF-SW 10/15(1) SM
HUMMINGBIRD, <i>Selasphorus</i>	JEF-SW 10/15(1) SM	WARBLER, Yellow JEF-SW 10/8(1) KS; JEF-SW 10/23(1) JAW
KINGFISHER, Belted	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 5 reps(15)	WARBLER, Magnolia JEF 5 reps(6)
WOODPECKER, Red-bellied	JEF 3 reps(7)	WARBLER, Yellow-rumped JEF-SRSP 10/9(3) MW; JEF-SW 10/23(1) JAW
SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied	HAI-SILS 10/27(1) KS; JEF-SW 10/9(1) MW; JEF-TP 10/11(1) JAW; JEF-SW 10/15(1) SM; JEF-SW 10/23(1) JAW; JEF-SW 10/29(3) MHW	WARBLER, Black-thr. Green JEF 5 reps(12)
WOODPECKER, Downy	JEF 7 reps(13)	WARBLER, Yellow-throated JEF-SW 10/8(1) KS; JEF-SW 10/9(1) MW; JEF-SW 10/11(1) JAW
FLICKER, Northern	JEF-SRSP 10/9(1) MW; JEF-SW 10/9(1) MW; JEF-TP 10/23(1) JAW	WARBLER, Palm JEF-SW 10/7(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 10/8(1) KS; JEF-SRSP 10/9(1) MW
WOOD-PEWEE, Eastern	JEF 3 reps(5)	WARBLER, Black-and-white JEF 5 reps(13)
FLYCATCHER, Least	JEF-SW 10/9(3) MW; JEF-SW 10/15(1) SM	REDSTART, American JEF-SRSP 10/9(3) MW; JEF-SW 10/11(1) JAW
EMPIDONAX species	JEF-SRSP 10/8(1) KS; JEF-SW 10/8(4) KS; JEF-TXPT 10/8(4) KS	OVENBIRD JEF-SRSP 10/9(1) MW; JEF-SW 10/11(1) JAW
PHOEBE, Eastern	JEF-MCFW 10/7(1) JJW; JEF-PI 10/7(1) JJW; JEF-SRSP 10/7(1) JJW; JEF-SRSP 10/9(2) MW; JEF-SW 10/15(5) SM; JEF-TXPT 10/15(1) SM; JEF-SW 10/23(5) JAW; JEF-TP 10/23(2) JAW; JEF 10/30(3) JAW; JEF-TP 10/30(3) JAW	YELLOWTHROAT, Common JEF 12 reps(54)
KINGBIRD, Western	JEF-SW 10/15(1) SM	WARBLER, Wilson's JEF-SRSP 10/9(2) MW; JEF-SW 10/16(1) GD
FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tailed	JEF-SRSP 10/7(7) JJW; JEF-TX87 10/7(1) JJW; JEF 10/8(6) KS; JEF-TX87 10/9(6) MW; JEF 10/11(2) JAW; JEF-TX87 10/11(2) JAW; JEF-SW 10/15(5) SM; JEF-SW 10/16(6) GD; JEF-MCFW 10/22(2) JAW; JEF-SRSP 10/22(8) JAW; JEF-TX87 10/22(13) JAW; JEF-TX87 10/23(1) JAW	CHAT, Yellow-breasted JEF 1 rep(3)
SHRIKE, Loggerhead	JEF 8 reps(17)	TANAGER, Summer JEF 3 reps(4)
VIREO, White-eyed	JEF 2 reps(3)	TANAGER, Scarlet JEF-SW 10/11(1) JAW; JEF-SW 10/29(1) MHW
VIREO, Blue-headed	JEF-SW 10/15(1) SM; JEF-SW 10/23(1) JAW; JEF-SW 10/29(1) MHW	SPARROW, Chipping JEF-SRSP 10/8(1) KS; JEF-SRSP 10/9(1) MW; JEF-SRSP 10/29(1) MHW
JAY, Blue	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 8 reps(16)	SPARROW, Clay-colored JEF-SRSP 10/7(2) JJW
CROW, American	JEF 1 rep(4)	SPARROW, Savannah JEF-PI 10/7(3) JJW; JEF-MCFW 10/22(20) JAW; JEF-TP 10/23(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 10/27(1) KS; JEF-TP 10/30(11) JAW
CROW, species	HAI 1 rep(100)	SPARROW, Grasshopper JEF-TXPT 10/16(1) GD
SWALLOW, Tree	JEF 7 reps(1200)	SPARROW, Nelson's Sharp-tl. JEF-TXPT 10/15(10) SM; JEF-TXPT 10/16(4) GD
SWALLOW, N. Rough-winged	JEF 2 reps(303)	SPARROW, Seaside JEF 2 reps(51)
SWALLOW, Barn	JEF 5 reps(42)	SPARROW, Song JEF-TXPT 10/7(1) JJW
CHICKADEE, Carolina	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 3 reps(5)	SPARROW, Lincoln's JEF-SRSP 10/29(1) MHW
TITMOUSE, Tufted	HAI 1 rep(3)	SPARROW, Swamp JEF-SW 10/15(1) SM; JEF-SW 10/16(3) GD; JEF-TP 10/16(5) SM; JEF-TXPT 10/16(2) GD; JEF-SW 10/23(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 10/29(6) MHW; JEF-SW 10/29(1) MHW; JEF-TP 10/30(2) JAW
CREEPER, Brown	JEF-SW 10/23(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 10/29(1) MHW	SPARROW, White-throated JEF-SRSP 10/29(2) MHW
WREN, Carolina	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 4 reps(7)	SPARROW, White-crowned JEF-SRSP 10/15(1) SM
WREN, House	HAI-SILS 10/30(1) KS; JEF-PI 10/7(1) JJW; JEF-SW 10/8(1) KS; JEF-TXPT 10/8(1) KS; JEF-SRSP 10/9(2) MW; JEF-SW 10/15(1) SM; JEF-SW 10/16(1) GD; JEF-TP 10/16(1) SM; JEF-SRSP 10/23(1) JAW; JEF-SW 10/23(4) JAW; JEF-SRSP 10/29(1) MHW	CARDINAL, Northern JEF 9 reps(17)
WREN, Marsh	JEF-TXPT 10/15(1) SM; JEF-TP 10/16(1) SM; JEF-TXPT 10/16(2) GD	GROSBEAK, Rose-breasted JEF-SW 10/8(2) KS; JEF-SRSP 10/9(1) MW; JEF-SW 10/9(1) MW; JEF-SRSP 10/11(1) JAW; JEF-SW 10/15(2) SM; JEF-SW 10/16(2) GD; JEF-SW 10/23(2) JAW; JEF-SRSP 10/27(1) KS
KINGLET, Golden-crowned	HAI-SILS 10/26(1) KS; HAI-SILS 10/30(7) KS; JEF-SRSP 10/23(4) JAW; JEF-SW 10/23(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 10/27(4) KS; JEF-SRSP 10/29(3) MHW; JEF-SW 10/29(1) MHW; ORA 10/26(1) KS	GROSBEAK, Blue JEF-SRSP 10/7(2) JJW; JEF-SW 10/8(1) KS
KINGLET, Ruby-crowned	JEF 14 reps(105)	BUNTING, Indigo JEF 9 reps(46)
GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray	JEF 8 reps(93)	DICKCISSEL JEF-TP 10/16(1) SM
BLUEBIRD, Eastern	HAI 2 reps(4)	BLACKBIRD, Red-winged JEF 9 reps(124)
THRUSH, Hermit	JEF-SW 10/23(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 10/29(1) MHW; JEF-SW 10/29(2) MHW	GRACKLE, Common JEF 1 rep(5)
THRUSH, Wood	JEF-SW 10/23(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 10/29(1) MHW	GRACKLE, Boat-tailed JEF 7 reps(117)
THRUSH, Varied	JEF-SRSP 10/22 (1) LB	GRACKLE, Great-tailed JEF 6 reps(1094)
ROBIN, American	JEF-NEDR 10/20(3) JAW	COWBIRD, Brown-headed JEF 1 rep(50)
CATBIRD, Gray	JEF 9 reps(29)	ORIOLE, Orchard JEF-PI 10/7(1) JJW
MOCKINGBIRD, Northern	JEF 12 reps(38)	SPARROW, House HAI 1 rep(5); JEF 2 reps(6)
THRASHER, Brown	JEF 7 reps(41)	Number of Species 163
STARLING, European	HAI 1 rep(4); JEF 8 reps(139)	Number of Individuals 16753
WARBLER, Tennessee	JEF 1 rep(2)	County Abbreviations: HAI – Hardin; JEF – Jefferson; ORA – Orange
WARBLER, Orange-crowned	JEF-SW 10/9(2) MW; JEF-SW 10/15(1) SM; JEF-SW 10/22(1) JAW; JEF-SW 10/29(2) MHW; JEF-TP 10/30(1) JAW	Location Codes: BMT – Beaumont; MCFW – McFaddin NWR; NEDR – Nederland; PI – Pleasure Island, Port Arthur; SILS – Silsbee; 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
WARBLER, Nashville	JEF-PI 10/7(1) JJW; JEF-SW	Observer Abbreviations: GD – Gerald Duhon; JAW – John Whittle; JJW – John and Jana Whittle; KS – Ken Sztraky; LB – Lynn Barber; MHW – Steve Mayes, John Haynes, John Whittle; MW – Steve Mayes and John Whittle; SM – Steve Mayes

Field Trip to West Jefferson County -- 19 November 2005

A cool Saturday morning in October found members of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society parked along a road side in rural, western Jefferson County to begin a day of much needed recreation and distraction. Having recently endured Hurricane Rita, the evacuation and (worst of all) the cleanup, an enjoyable day of birding was just the ticket. Agenda for the day: Gilbert Ranch, sparrows, raptors, shorebirds and the search for a few hard to get Jefferson County species (namely Sandhill Crane and Vermilion Flycatcher).

Unfortunately, a family emergency prevented the group from access to Gilbert Ranch. Its birding wonders will have to wait for another day! But this did not slow down these birders, as they met on Johnson Road to begin the day. An especially early birder or two got looks at both LeConte's and Grasshopper Sparrows, no mean feat for these two notorious skulkers! Other sparrows were noticed when the rest of the group began to arrive. Most numerous (by a wide margin) were the many Savannah Sparrows in the grassy fields all over western Jefferson County. Other birds seen in the vicinity included Eastern Meadowlarks, Common Yellowthroat and American Crow. A male Merlin zipped across one the fields giving a show for most of the group and active Eastern Phoebes were found easily along fence lines as they dashed after insects.

As the group wound its way through the back roads toward FM1406, the main goal was to find Sandhill Cranes. Cranes often congregate in the fields of this part of the county but a scouting trip the week before had come up empty. It was hoped that a strong cold front that moved through late in the week might bring some of these magnificent birds with it. Sure enough, the sky and fields bordering these rural roads began to reveal Sandhill Cranes. Their long legs and neck and gray plumage, obvious in flight or on the ground and their odd, yodeling calls were soon obvious as well. The cranes were milling about, occasionally setting down in the fields and giving distant, but nice looks through any of the groups spotting scopes. The blessing of this part of the county for birds (little development) is also its curse sometimes (for birders) as there were no roads that allowed close access to the cranes but all agreed that having the birds around is much more important than up close looks.

Raptors were another great feature of the day. Northern Harriers were pretty common on the day, usually seen quartering low over the fields, as is their manner. Red-tailed Hawks were numerous, perched on poles and trees. Several different plumage types were seen of this variable hawk ranging from the typical "Eastern" to some of the paler races of the southwest and Great Plains. Little American Kestrels were easy to find as they perched on wires in search of insects and other small prey. A nice find was a couple of Crested Caracaras, never easy in Jefferson County, flying distantly over a field. A little later, one bird was seen at a little closer range by some birders along FM1406. Red-shouldered Hawks were encountered periodically on the day. A raptor highlight was a distant Peregrine Falcon perched on the ground in a field along South China Road.

Shorebirds were another focus of this trip. A few wet fields along South China Road (consistently one of the best birding roads in this part of the county) and nearby roads produced a nice variety. Both Yellowlegs waded side by side while many Dunlin probed the mud. Long-billed Dowitchers fed actively in the waters while small, Least Sandpipers worked the muddier regions. A lone Long-billed Curlew was well studied as were a few Black-bellied Plovers. A distant bird tantalized the birders with its unique look. Was it an extremely late Pectoral Sandpiper? Difficult to say from that distance but an intriguing possibility.

Another quest for this group was to make the journey out to Thompson Road. For at least three consecutive winters, one home at 4815 Thompson Road (and especially the fences and wires around this home) has produced one or more Vermilion Flycatchers. These brilliant little fireballs are a treat for any birder no matter how experienced. Again, an earlier scouting trip had failed to find any of these birds but one came through on the field trip! A brilliant scarlet (or is it vermilion?) and black male was perched on a fence line just waiting for the birders to line up spotting scopes on it. Hopefully, these colorful birds will make Thompson Road their winter home for many years to come.

A few birders finished off the field trip with a stop at Tyrrell Park's Cattail Marsh. This is the best and most easily accessible spot for ducks and other water birds in Jefferson County. The marsh did not disappoint on this day producing not only the usual Blue-winged Teal, Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, Lesser Scaup and Northern Shovelers but multiple individuals of less common ducks. Mallard were seen easily and a single Greater Scaup was picked out from the crowds. A nice male Redhead (very scarce at Cattail Marsh) was seen well and at least one Canvasback was seen distantly. Add those in with Ruddy Ducks, Mottled Ducks and Northern Pintails seen at the marsh and the flocks of Greater White-fronted, Snow and associated Ross's Geese seen flying around on the day and you have quite a waterfowl experience. But the marsh was not done! Pond One produced a rare feat, showing off four different species of Grebe! Several, common Pied-billed Grebes mixed in with multiple Eared Grebes, at least two Horned Grebes and a single Least Grebe among the ducks to give quite a show for the remaining birders.

This was the first truly organized field trip for the Golden Triangle Audubon Society to western Jefferson County. This seems surprising considering its good birding and close location but one thing the birding on this day made clear. With Sandhill Cranes, Crested Caracaras, Peregrine Falcons, LeConte's Sparrow and lots of geese, hawks, sparrows and shorebirds, it will not be the last!

The following species were recorded on the trip: Greater White-fronted Goose (47); Snow Goose (330); Ross's Goose (11); Gadwall (52); Mallard (56); Mottled Duck (18); Blue-winged Teal (30); Northern Shoveler (600); Northern Pintail (2); Green-winged Teal (309); Canvasback (2); Redhead (1); Ring-necked Duck (25); Greater Scaup (1); Lesser Scaup (210); Ruddy Duck (50); Least Grebe (1); Pied-

billed Grebe (3); Horned Grebe (2); Eared Grebe (4); Great Blue Heron (3); Great Egret (4); Cattle Egret (1); Plegadis species Ibis (58); Black Vulture (25); Turkey Vulture (9); Northern Harrier (6); Red-shouldered Hawk (6); Red-tailed Hawk (7); Crested Caracara (2); American Kestrel (5); Merlin (2); Peregrine Falcon (1); Sora (2); American Coot (200); Sandhill Crane (132); Black-bellied Plover (2); Killdeer (20); Greater Yellowlegs (3); Lesser Yellowlegs (66); Spotted Sandpiper (1); Long-billed Curlew (1); Least Sandpiper (31); Pectoral Sandpiper (1); Dunlin (45); Long-billed Dowitcher (200); Laughing Gull (8); Ring-billed Gull (3); Mourning Dove (65); Belted Kingfisher (1); Red-bellied Woodpecker (2); Downy Woodpecker (1); Pileated Woodpecker (1); Eastern Phoebe (9); Vermilion Flycatcher (1); Loggerhead

Shrike (3); American Crow (1); Tree Swallow (11); Carolina Wren (1); House Wren (1); Sedge Wren (5); Marsh Wren (4); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (1); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (3); Eastern Bluebird (2); Gray Catbird (1); Northern Mockingbird (3); European Starling (4); American Pipit (3); Orange-crowned Warbler (1); Yellow-rumped Warbler (5); Pine Warbler (1); Palm Warbler (1); Common Yellowthroat (3); Savannah Sparrow (23); Grasshopper Sparrow (1); LeConte's Sparrow (1); Song Sparrow (1); Swamp Sparrow (6); Northern Cardinal (1); Red-winged Blackbird (2); Eastern Meadowlark (7); Common Grackle (5); Great-tailed Grackle (50); Brown-headed Cowbird (50).

Steve Mayes

The Status of Local State Parks

Hurricane Rita has dealt a double blow to local State Parks. Damage from the hurricane has resulted in expensive repairs being needed but the closed parks are not generating any fee income. And this comes in a fiscal year when state appropriated funds were grossly inadequate to start with.

At Sea Rim State Park, at the three-story wooden deck, headquarters, the rough wood was effectively sandblasted by the wind of the hurricane and will need repainting. The most extensive damage was to the water and waste water system. The siding of the second story women's bathroom was blasted off by the storm, right down to the dry wall. Telephone service in the area is still described as "sketchy." The boat ramp is open to accommodate duck hunters, and the park is honoring pre-scheduled airboat tours and extending its air-boat season later into the year to bring in much needed revenue. The park will remain closed possibly through January, perhaps longer. The boardwalk at the Willows, which is connected directly to a small parking area on the side of Highway 87, is accessible for birding.

At the Sabine Pass Battleground State Historical Park, the storm surge turned the metal boat ramp into a battering ram to bring down the front wall of a new restroom. There was also severe erosion damage along the river bank. The storm hasn't kept the staff of six at home. Rather the wildlife biologists are busy rebuilding the two parks.

Village Creek State Park in Hardin County is a small park of 1,050 acres, of which about 60 acres are available for camping, but it hosts 65,000 campers annually. The park serves both as a buffer zone to protect the adjoining Big Thicket National Preserve and to provide visitors to the preserve a place to camp. It is hoped to re-open the park by early spring although reservations aren't currently being taken for dates earlier than June.

Uprooted and blown down trees brought significant damage to camp site infrastructure. A tornado apparently touched down twice in the park -- snapping and twisting many trees. Heavy pine trunks blocked the entrance to the pavilion and tree tops shrouded the children's playground. In all, between 50 and 90 percent of the park's canopy in a 640-acre area was destroyed. Local loggers began extracting timber in recent weeks creating new tracks and space for much needed

additional parking in the process. The park manager estimates it will be 50 years before it looks the same again. However, he noted that hurricanes are natural. The trees in the forest in the vicinity of the park were all of approximately the same age, which is unnatural. The area will be replanted with long-leaf pine and will take on a more natural staggered age appearance.

Generally over the whole of southeast Texas, pine trees in exposed areas, without surrounding trees, tended to be blown completely over by the winds of the hurricane. Those in heavily forested areas were more likely to have snapped off 20 or 30 feet up, although many fell over as well. Hardwood trees generally were even more vulnerable, with the notable exception of live oaks. Other oak species were uprooted rather easily, while live oaks tended "merely" to lose branches, albeit quite large branches in many cases.

At Martin Dies Jr. State Park, which straddles the Jasper-Tyler county line, logging crews went to work in early November clearing trees felled by the winds. Unfortunately, a glutted market means that the price of salvage logs is low. The trees interestingly enough still belong to the Corps of Engineers, reflecting the origins of the park and the creation of Steinhagen Lake by the Town Bluff dam. The park may be closed through the end of the year, as the facilities such as the restrooms and screened shelters are made accessible once again and repaired as necessary.

Sabine Woods Work Day

The Sabine Woods Work Day on Saturday October 29 was outstandingly successful. Fourteen people showed up, with eight chain saws between them. As a result, we made short work of clearing the boardwalks and we were then able to clear almost all the other trails. We rerouted a couple of trails around fallen trees, but for the most part, we opened all the existing trails back up. There is very little hurricane related work left to do.

We owe a great debt of thanks to all who worked for their invaluable efforts on the Work Day: Carol Bookout, James Cacioppo, Sherry Gibson, John Haynes, Gary Kelley, Art Mackinnon, Steve Mayes, Charles Nicotra, Richard Orgeron, John Park, Aaron Poskey, Sherrie Roden, and Carol Sloan

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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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