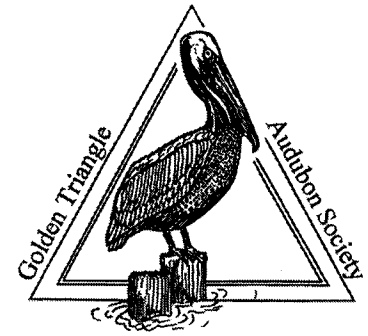


# *Brown Pelican*

**Scanned from Originals**

# The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 12 No. 1

January 2006

**Membership Meeting  
Thursday, January 19, 2006  
6:30 PM, Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont**

**Speaker: Margaret Pickell  
Wildlife Rehab & Education**

**Margaret Pickell is a State and Federally licensed wildlife rehabilitator and member of the Wildlife Rehab and Education oiled wildlife response team. She has just recently returned from an oil spill in Louisiana that impacted a nesting colony of Brown Pelicans. She has been a rehabilitator for over 20 years and has probably taken care of over 10,000 animals during this period. She is a retired elementary school teacher and a certified Texas Master Naturalist. Margaret has combined her love for children and animals and has developed several programs to educate our youth on the wonders of our native wildlife.**

**Margaret was originally scheduled to be our speaker in September last year, but was called away to help with wildlife rescue in the New Orleans area following Hurricane Katrina.**

**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.**

## **Habitat Recovery in the New Year**

The year 2005 will not be easily forgotten, and reminders of Hurricane Rita will be all around us in our birding locations for many years to come. But, unlike our damaged man-made structures, the habitat will recover on its own. We did a lot of work at Sabine Woods, but this was to restore access. The fallen branches and trees will take many years to decompose, but will provide bird habitat – cover and food for insects that many species feed on – during this process. Although a lot of upper branches were torn off by the winds, the canopy should reestablish itself mostly this spring, and fully by next spring. Seedlings in any newly opened areas will grow and flourish. Hurricanes are natural processes, and act as a natural thinning process, taking out the weakest trees and allowing a healthy woodlot with trees of varying age to develop.

## *The Brown Pelican*

Vol. 12, No.1 Jan 2006

Golden Triangle  
Audubon Society

RARE BIRD ALERT AND  
SOCIETY INFORMATION  
TELEPHONE NUMBER  
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[www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org)

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## Calendar of Events

**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 Harris's) and raptors (including Caracara and Bald Eagle). The meeting place 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, but because of construction is not well signposted. 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](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org) or call Steve Mayes at 722-5807 two or three days before to confirm details. Although it is a two and one-half hour 105-mile drive from the Golden Triangle, this has been a very popular trip in past years.

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.

**Thursday February 16. Membership Meeting.** Speaker: David Sarkozi,

President of Texas Ornithological Society

**Saturday February 18.** Location and details to be arranged

**Thursday March 16. Membership Meeting.** Speaker: John O'Neill.

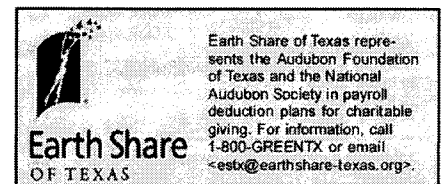
**Saturday March 18. Field Trip.** Location and details to be finalized, but usually we go to Bolivar Flats in March.

## 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 urgently **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.



# Sea Rim State Park Christmas Bird Count – 2 January 2006

Apart from some fog early in the day, the weather was delightful for the Sea Rim Christmas Count. We are grateful to Gene Cox and the staff at Sea Rim for allowing us into the otherwise closed Park, to Patrick Walther of McFaddin NWR for once again arranging access and providing 4-wheeler and airboat conveyance within Texas Point and McFaddin refuges, and to Jim Sutherlin for allowing access into the J. D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area.

Despite some fears that Hurricane Rita and its effects might have negatively affected the number of species and birds, we found 162 species – the second highest since the count was resumed in 1995 – and a pretty much normal total number of birds. With hindsight, we may in a few years be able to identify species which were affected.

New to the count were Sandhill Crane and Northern Waterthrush both seen by the party in Murphree. The male Prairie Warbler that is wintering for a second year in Sabine Woods was seen. Other species not necessarily always present in the count circle included Surf Scoter (in the Gulf off Sea Rim), Northern Gannet (same location), Green Heron (in Murphree), Wilson's Plover (on the beach at Sea Rim), Red Knot (18 on the beach at Sea Rim), Gull-billed Tern (Pleasure Island) Common Tern (beach at Sea Rim), and Vesper Sparrow (Sea Rim party).

Unusual "misses" were Black-necked Stilt (there seem to be plenty in Jefferson and Orange Counties – just not in the count circle), Sharp-shinned Hawk, Eastern Bluebird (sometimes they just stay well north of the coast in winter), and American Robin. Robins were scarce, but not absent, on the counts a little further north, but since the vast majority are winter visitors, not usually arriving in the Big Thicket area until November, it is unlikely that their absence is a direct result of Rita. It may be more connected with the general drought conditions prevailing in an area from the Gulf north through a good portion of the United States.

Waterfowl numbers were probably within normal limits. A lot of Canada Geese, but relatively low numbers of Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, Bufflehead and Lesser Scaup. Anhingas were plentiful. The 12 American Bitterns that Patrick Walther found for us in less than an hour on McFaddin were impressive. A very large roost in McFaddin contributed to the high number of Black-crowned Night-Herons recorded.

The absence of Sharp-shinned Hawks was compensated for by good numbers of other raptors – Cooper's, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks, and Merlins. Crested Caracaras are now expected, and although it is difficult to be sure, it seems likely that at least four of the five reported were different birds.

On the beach, high numbers of Black-bellied Plovers were seen, as well as the Wilson's Plover. Semipalmated Plovers were not numerous, however, and Willets were strangely low. Six Woodcocks matches experience elsewhere on the coast this winter. Gull-billed and Common Tern were found, something that does not happen every year.

Eurasian Collared-Doves were down, while Inca Dove was not found for the third year in a row.

Passerine species were surprisingly normal, with high numbers of both species of kinglet and Orange-crowned Warblers but with low numbers of Blue Jays and Northern Cardinals. Given that there were large numbers everywhere in the county in mid-December, the number of Pine Warblers was surprisingly low. Sparrows of most species were probably below average as were blackbird and grackles. House Sparrow proved very hard to find!

Count results were: WHISTLING-DUCK, Black-bellied (9); GOOSE, Greater White-fronted (138); GOOSE, Snow (2495); GOOSE, Snow (White) (706); GOOSE, Snow (Blue) (130); GOOSE, Ross's (5); GOOSE, Canada (375); GOOSE, species (190); GADWALL (379); WIGEON, American (389); MALLARD (10); DUCK, Mottled (123); TEAL, Blue-winged (35); SHOVELER, Northern (88); PINTAIL, Northern (271); TEAL, Green-winged (795); CANVASBACK (3200);

REDHEAD (2); DUCK, Ring-necked (120); SCAUP, Greater (1); SCAUP, Lesser (373); SCAUP, Species (449); SCOTER, Surf (1); BUFFLEHEAD (19); MERGANSER, Hooded (23); MERGANSER, Red-breasted (2); DUCK, Ruddy (303); DUCK, species (62); LOON, Common (3); GREBE, Pied-billed (55); GREBE, Horned (2); GREBE, Eared (2); GANNET, Northern (2); PELICAN, American White (1028); PELICAN, Brown (175); CORMORANT, Neotropic (215); CORMORANT, Double-crested (121); ANHINGA (19); BITTERN, American (12); HERON, Great Blue (90); EGRET, Great (180); EGRET, Snowy (117); HERON, Little Blue (18); HERON, Tricolored (51); HERON, Green (1); NIGHT-HERON, Black-crowned (157); NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crowned (20); IBIS, White (168); IBIS, White-faced (27); IBIS, Plegadis species (136); SPOONBILL, Roseate (78); VULTURE, Black (17); VULTURE, Turkey (100); OSPREY (7); KITE, White-tailed (4); HARRIER, Northern (32); HAWK, Cooper's (6); HAWK, Red-shouldered (13); HAWK, Red-tailed (53); CARACARA, Crested (5); KESTREL, American (17); MERLIN (11); FALCON, Peregrine (3); RAIL, Yellow (1); RAIL, Clapper (5); RAIL, King (10); RAIL, Virginia (5); SORA (2); MOORHEN, Common (70); COOT, American (724); CRANE, Sandhill (12); PLOVER, Black-bellied (144); PLOVER, Snowy (30); PLOVER, Wilson's (1); PLOVER, Semipalmated (14); PLOVER, Piping (3); KILLDEER (145); OYSTERCATCHER, American (2); AVOCET, American (146); YELLOWLEGS, Greater (17); YELLOWLEGS, Lesser (31); WILLET (39); SANDPIPER, Spotted (4); WHIMBREL (11); CURLEW, Long-billed (9); TURNSTONE, Ruddy (21); KNOT, Red (18); SANDERLING (286); SANDPIPER, Western (190); SANDPIPER, Least (55); DUNLIN (630); SANDPIPER species (13); DOWITCHER, Short-billed (57); DOWITCHER, Long-billed (172); DOWITCHER, species (150); SNIPE, Wilson's (22); WOODCOCK, American (6); GULL, Laughing (1868); GULL, Bonaparte's (85); GULL, Ring-billed (1321); GULL, Herring (87); TERN, Gull-billed (3); TERN, Caspian (52); TERN, Royal (97); TERN, Common (2); TERN, Forster's (252); PIGEON, Rock (22); COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian (2); DOVE, White-winged (9); DOVE, Mourning (198); OWL, Barn (1); OWL, Great Horned (2); HUMMINGBIRD species (2); KINGFISHER, Belted (28); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (7); SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied (7); WOODPECKER, Downy (23); FLICKER, Northern (5); PHOEBE, Eastern (69); FLYCATCHER, Vermilion (3); SHRIKE, Loggerhead (34); VIREO, White-eyed (3); VIREO, Blue-headed (19); JAY, Blue (15); CROW species (1); SWALLOW, Tree (20); CHICKADEE, Carolina (18); CREEPER, Brown (2); WREN, Carolina (13); WREN, House (27); WREN, Winter (2); WREN, Sedge (25); WREN, Marsh (40); KINGLET, Golden-crowned (17); KINGLET, Ruby-crowned (126); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (69); THRUSH, Hermit (3); CATBIRD, Gray (26); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (33); THRASHER, Brown (18); STARLING, European (368); PIPIT, American (28); WARBLER, Orange-crowned (101); WARBLER, Yellow-rumped (208); WARBLER, Yellow-r. (Myrtle) (130); WARBLER, Pine (3); WARBLER, Prairie (1); WARBLER, Palm (3); WARBLER, Black-and-white (1); WATERTHRUSH, Northern (1); YELLOW-THROAT, Common (50); WARBLER, Wilson's (4); TOWHEE, Eastern (1); SPARROW, Vesper (1); SPARROW, Savannah (79); SPARROW, LeConte's (5); SPARROW, Nelson's Sharp-tailed (20); SPARROW, Seaside (32); SPARROW, Song (14); SPARROW, Lincoln's (1); SPARROW, Swamp (137); SPARROW, White-throated (86); CARDINAL, Northern (47); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (1035); MEADOW-LARK, Eastern (19); GRACKLE, Common (96); GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (217); GRACKLE, Great-tailed (337); GRACKLE, species (50); COWBIRD, Brown-headed (12); GOLDFINCH, American (42); SPARROW, House (1); SPECIES, total (162); INDIVIDUALS, total (24469). Observers (31); Parties (11-13); Party-hours total (93.00); Party-miles total (250.00); Party-hours on foot (49.50); Party-miles on foot (34.50); Party-hours by car (28.50); Party-miles by car (121.50); Party-hours by boat (7.00); Party-miles by boat (35.00); Party-hours by airboat (3.50); Party-miles by airboat (50.00); Party-hours by 4-wheeler (3.50); Party-miles by 4-wheeler (9.00); Party-hours stationary (1.00)

Participants: Allene and Richard Ashmore, Richard Carey, Howard Davis, Gerald Duhon, Nancy and Don Fisher, Sherry Gibson, Bill Graber, Scott Gremel, Corey Haddon, John Haynes, Margo Holst, Don Jeane, Rose Ann Jordan, Andy Kasner and sons, D. J. Kava, Gary Kelley, Linda Lang, Art MacKinnon, Betsy Mathews, Steve Mayes, Royce Pendergast, Alice Richardson, Sherrie Roden, Kens Sztraky, Patrick Walther, Tex Wells, Colt Westbrook, Jana and John Whittle.

## Bird Sightings – November 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:** This month's report marks a return to near normalcy after the unusual events of the previous two months. A review of the details below suggests a fairly normal end to the fall season, with an interesting selection of lingering migrants. Three Burrowing Owls on McFaddin NWR is encouraging, and the presence of one in a very accessible location was very welcome. Overshooting winter birds have included Brown Creepers and Golden-crowned Kinglets.

<b>GOOSE, White-fronted</b>	JEF 5 reps(227)	<b>HAWK, Red-tailed</b>	JEF 14 reps(91)
<b>GOOSE, Snow</b>	JEF 6 reps(4805)	<b>CARACARA, Crested</b>	JEF-SRSP 11/13(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/16(1) SGR; JEF 11/19(1) FTWJ; JEF 11/30(1) AM
<b>GOOSE, Ross's</b>	JEF 11/12(1) HM; JEF-SW 11/16(2) SGR; JEF 11/19(11) FTWJ; JEF-SW 11/20(4) MW; JEF 11/30(11) AM	<b>KESTREL, American</b>	JEF 10 reps(33)
<b>DUCK, Wood</b>	JEF-TP 11/20(4) JAW	<b>MERLIN</b>	JEF 11/19(1) FTWJ; JEF 11/20(1) JFW; JEF 11/27(1) JAW; JEF 11/30(3) AM
<b>GADWALL</b>	JEF 3 reps(190)	<b>FALCON, Peregrine</b>	JEF 11/8(1) GD; JEF 11/9(1) GD; JEF 11/19(1) FTWJ; JEF 11/20(1) JFW; JEF 11/30(1) AM
<b>MALLARD</b>	JEF 2 reps(61)	<b>SORA</b>	JEF 2 reps(4)
<b>DUCK, Mottled</b>	JEF-TP 11/6(2) JAW; JEF-TP 11/19(18) FTWJ; JEF-TP 11/20(7) JAW	<b>MOORHEN, Common</b>	JEF 2 reps(6)
<b>TEAL, Blue-winged</b>	JEF 3 reps(120)	<b>COOT, American</b>	JEF 3 reps(594)
<b>TEAL species</b>	JEF 2 reps(1450)	<b>CRANE, Sandhill</b>	JEF 11/19(132) FTWJ; JEF 11/27(230) JAW
<b>SHOVELER, Northern</b>	JEF 3 reps(1020)	<b>PLOVER, Black-bellied</b>	JEF 4 reps(26)
<b>PINTAIL, Northern</b>	JEF 3 reps(24)	<b>PLOVER, Snowy</b>	JEF 11/30(14) AM
<b>TEAL, Green-winged</b>	JEF 3 reps(874)	<b>PLOVER, Wilson's</b>	JEF 11/30(1) AM
<b>CANVASBACK</b>	JEF-TP 11/19(2) FTWJ; JEF-TP 11/20(1) JAW	<b>PLOVER, Semipalmated</b>	JEF 3 reps(12)
<b>REDHEAD</b>	JEF-TP 11/19(1) FTWJ; JEF-TP 11/20(4) JAW	<b>PLOVER, Piping</b>	JEF 11/30(9) AM
<b>DUCK, Ring-necked</b>	JEF 2 reps(135)	<b>KILLDEER</b>	JEF 5 reps(102)
<b>SCAUP, Greater</b>	JEF-TP 11/19(1) FTWJ; JEF-TP 11/20(1) JAW	<b>STILT, Black-necked</b>	JEF 3 reps(160)
<b>SCAUP, Lesser</b>	JEF 4 reps(848)	<b>AVOCET, American</b>	JEF 2 reps(127)
<b>SCAUP species</b>	JEF 1 rep(20)	<b>YELLOWLEGS, Greater</b>	JEF 5 reps(21)
<b>DUCK, Ruddy</b>	JEF 3 reps(230)	<b>YELLOWLEGS, Lesser</b>	JEF 6 reps(79)
<b>LOON, Common</b>	JEF 1 rep(2)	<b>WILLET</b>	JEF 3 reps(20)
<b>GREBE, Least</b>	JEF-TP 11/19(1) FTWJ; JEF-TP 11/20(1) JAW	<b>SANDPIPER, Spotted</b>	JEF 1 rep(1)
<b>GREBE, Pied-billed</b>	JEF 3 reps(14)	<b>CURLEW, Long-billed</b>	JEF 3 reps(35)
<b>GREBE, Horned</b>	JEF-TP 11/19(2) FTWJ; JEF-TP 11/20(2) JAW	<b>TURNSTONE, Ruddy</b>	JEF 1 rep(1)
<b>GREBE, Eared</b>	JEF 2 reps(5)	<b>SANDERLING</b>	JEF 1 rep(161)
<b>GANNET, Northern</b>	JEF 11/30(21) AM	<b>SANDPIPER, Western</b>	JEF 3 reps(60)
<b>PELICAN, Amer. White</b>	JEF 2 reps(45)	<b>SANDPIPER, Peep</b>	JEF 1 rep(10)
<b>PELICAN, Brown</b>	JEF-TX87 11/6(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 11/27(2) JAW; JEF 11/30(22) AM	<b>SANDPIPER, Least</b>	JEF 4 reps(140)
<b>CORMORANT, Neotropic</b>	JEF-TX87 11/6(33) JAW; JEF-TX87 11/20(4) JAW; JEF-TX87 11/27(20) JAW	<b>SANDPIPER, Pectoral</b>	JEF 11/19(1) FTWJ
<b>CORMORANT, Double-crested</b>	JEF 1 rep(1)	<b>DUNLIN</b>	JEF 5 reps(91)
<b>ANHINGA</b>	JEF 1 rep(1)	<b>SANDPIPER, Stilt</b>	JEF-TP 11/6(3) JAW
<b>HERON, Great Blue</b>	JEF 5 reps(12)	<b>DOWITCHER, Short-billed</b>	JEF-TP 11/6(7) JAW
<b>EGRET, Great</b>	JEF 7 reps(77)	<b>DOWITCHER, Long-billed</b>	JEF 4 reps(1355)
<b>EGRET, Snowy</b>	JEF 3 reps(65)	<b>SNIPE, Common</b>	JEF 2 reps(2)
<b>HERON, Tricolored</b>	JEF 1 rep(2)	<b>WOODCOCK, American</b>	JEF-SW 11/13(1) GW; JEF-SW 11/30(1) AM
<b>EGRET, Cattle</b>	JEF 3 reps(4)	<b>PHALAROPE, Wilson's</b>	JEF-TP 11/6(2) JAW
<b>IBIS, White</b>	JEF-TP 11/6(13) JAW; JEF 11/20(2) JFW; JEF-TP 11/20(1) JAW; JEF 11/27(150) JAW	<b>GULL, Laughing</b>	JEF 6 reps(3274)
<b>IBIS, Glossy</b>	JEF-TP 11/6(1) JAW	<b>GULL, Franklin's</b>	JEF 11/30(2) AM
<b>IBIS, White-faced</b>	JEF-TP 11/6(11) JAW; JEF-TP 11/20(12) JAW	<b>GULL, Bonaparte's</b>	JEF 11/30(16) AM
<b>IBIS, Plegadis</b>	JEF-TP 11/6(106) JAW; JEF 11/19(53) FTWJ; JEF-TP 11/19(5) FTWJ; JEF-TP 11/20(28) JAW	<b>GULL, Ring-billed</b>	JEF 5 reps(827)
<b>SPOONBILL, Roseate</b>	JEF-TP 11/6(2) JAW	<b>GULL, Herring</b>	JEF 2 reps(27)
<b>VULTURE, Black</b>	JEF 5 reps(53)	<b>GULL, Lesser Black-backed</b>	JEF 11/30(2) AM
<b>VULTURE, Turkey</b>	JEF 6 reps(55)	<b>TERN, Gull-billed</b>	JEF-TP 11/6(10) JAW; JEF 11/12(12) HM
<b>KITE, White-tailed</b>	JEF 4 reps(8)	<b>TERN, Caspian</b>	JEF 1 rep(17)
<b>HARRIER, Northern</b>	JEF 13 reps(40)	<b>TERN, Royal</b>	JEF 1 rep(141)
<b>HAWK, Sharp-shinned</b>	JEF 1 rep(2)	<b>TERN, Sandwich</b>	JEF 11/30(1) AM
<b>HAWK, Red-shouldered</b>	JEF 8 reps(13)	<b>TERN, Forster's</b>	JEF 3 reps(61)
<b>HAWK, Swainson's</b>	JEF 11/12(1) HM	<b>DOVE, Rock</b>	JEF 5 reps(62)
		<b>COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian</b>	JEF 4 reps(10)
		<b>DOVE, White-winged</b>	JEF 1 rep(1)
		<b>DOVE, Mourning</b>	JEF 6 reps(171)
		<b>OWL, Barn</b>	JEF-SW 11/6(2) JAW; JEF-SW 11/13(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/20(1) SM; JEF-SW 11/27(1) JAW
		<b>OWL, Great Horned</b>	JEF-SW 11/13(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/20(2) MW; JEF-SW 11/20(1) SM; JEF-SW 11/22(1) SGR; JEF-SW 11/27(1) JAW

**OWL, Burrowing** JEF-MCFW 11/13(1) JAW; JEF-MCFW 11/20(1) MW; JEF-MCFW 11/21(3) MCF; JEF-MCFW 11/27(1) JAW; JEF-MCFW 11/30(1) AM  
**HUMMINGBIRD, Buff-bellied** JEF-SW 11/11(1) SGR  
**HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous** JEF-NEDR 11/16(1) JFW  
**HUMMINGBIRD, Selasphorus** HAI 11/21(1) JM; HAI 11/25(1) JM  
**HUMMINGBIRD species** JEF-NEDR 11/4(1) JJW; JEF-NEDR 11/13(1) JAW  
**KINGFISHER, Belted** JEF 6 reps(18)  
**WOODPECKER, Red-bellied** JEF 3 reps(8)  
**SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied** JEF 4 reps(4)  
**WOODPECKER, Downy** JEF 8 reps(11)  
**FLICKER, Northern** JEF 1 rep(1)  
**WOODPECKER, Pileated** JEF 1 rep(1)  
**FLYCATCHER, Least** JEF-SW 11/16(1) SGR  
**FLYCATCHER, Cordilleran?** JEF-SW 11/13(1) GW  
**EMPIDONAX species** JEF-SW 11/11(1) SGR  
**PHOEBE, Eastern** JEF 13 reps(47)  
**FLYCATCHER, Vermilion** JEF 11/19(1) FTWJ; JEF 11/20(3) JFW; JEF 11/27(2) JAW  
**SHRIKE, Loggerhead** JEF 9 reps(60)  
**VIREO, Yellow-throated** JEF-SW 11/22(1) SGR  
**VIREO, Blue-headed** JEF 7 reps(8)  
**JAY, Blue** JEF 4 reps(17)  
**CROW, American** JEF 1 rep(1)  
**SWALLOW, Tree** JEF 11/19(5) FTWJ; JEF-TP 11/20(1) MW  
**CHICKADEE, Carolina** JEF 5 reps(7)  
**CREEPER, Brown** JEF-SRSP 11/2(1) JLU; JEF-SW 11/2(1) JLU; JEF-SW 11/30(1) AM  
**WREN, Carolina** JEF 5 reps(6)  
**WREN, House** JEF-SRSP 11/2(1) JLU; JEF-SW 11/12(2) SGR; JEF-SRSP 11/13(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/16(1) SGR; JEF-TP 11/19(1) FTWJ; JEF-SW 11/20(1) MW  
**WREN, Winter** JEF-SW 11/8(1) SGR; JEF-SW 11/12(2) SGR; JEF-SW 11/16(2) SGR; JEF-SRSP 11/30(1) AM  
**WREN, Sedge** JEF 11/19(4) FTWJ; JEF-TP 11/19(1) FTWJ; JEF-SW 11/20(4) MW  
**WREN, Marsh** JEF-TP 11/19(4) FTWJ; JEF-TP 11/20(2) JAW  
**KINGLET, Golden-crowned** JEF-SRSP 11/2(10) JLU; JEF-SW 11/2(10) JLU; JEF-SW 11/12(1) SGR; JEF-SW 11/13(2) GW; JEF-SW 11/13(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/16(3) SGR; JEF-SRSP 11/20(2) MW; JEF-SW 11/20(3) MW; JEF-SW 11/22(1) SGR; JEF-SW 11/27(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/30(7) AM  
**KINGLET, Ruby-crowned** JEF 12 reps(91)  
**GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray** JEF 10 reps(76)  
**BLUEBIRD, Eastern** JEF 2 reps(5)  
**THRUSH, Swainson's** JEF-SW 11/2(5) JLU  
**THRUSH, Hermit** JEF-SRSP 11/2(1) JLU; JEF-SW 11/2(5) JLU; JEF-SW 11/20(1) MW  
**THRUSH, Wood** JEF-SW 11/13(1) GW; JEF-SW 11/16(1) SGR  
**ROBIN, American** JEF-SRSP 11/20(3) MW; JEF-SW 11/20(2) MW; JEF-TP 11/20(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 11/28(7) JAW  
**CATBIRD, Gray** JEF-SW 11/2(2) JLU; JEF-SW 11/12(4) SGR; JEF-SRSP 11/13(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/13(2) JAW; JEF-SW 11/16(2) SGR; JEF 11/19(1) FTWJ; JEF-SW 11/20(5) MW; JEF-SRSP 11/27(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/27(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/30(1) AM  
**MOCKINGBIRD, Northern** JEF 7 reps(23)  
**THRASHER, Brown** JEF 6 reps(15)  
**THRASHER, Long-billed** JEF-SW 11/30(1) AM  
**STARLING, European** JEF 7 reps(192)  
**PIPIT, American** JEF 3 reps(59)  
**WARBLER, Tennessee** JEF-SW 11/13(1) GW; JEF-SW 11/16(1) SGR  
**WARBLER, Orange-crowned** JEF 9 reps(52)  
**WARBLER, Nashville** JEF-SW 11/12(1) SGR; JEF-SW 11/13(1) GW; JEF-SW 11/13(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/20(1) MW  
**PARULA, Northern** JEF-SW 11/2(1) JLU  
**WARBLER, Magnolia** JEF-SW 11/8(1) SGR; JEF-SW 11/13(1) GW  
**WARBLER, Black-thr. Blue** JEF-SRSP 11/13(1) JAW  
**WARBLER, Yellow-rumped** JEF 12 reps(43)

**WARBLER, Black-thr. Green** JEF-SRSP 11/2(1) JLU; JEF-SW 11/11(1) SGR; JEF-SRSP 11/13(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/13(1) GW; JEF-SW 11/30(1) AM  
**WARBLER, Pine** JEF 3 reps(4)  
**WARBLER, Prairie** JEF-SW 11/20(1) MW  
**WARBLER, Palm** JEF 11/12(1) GD; JEF-SW 11/13(1) GW  
**YELLOWTHROAT, Common** JEF 6 reps(13)  
**WARBLER, Wilson's** JEF-SRSP 11/20(1) MW  
**CHAT, Yellow-breasted** JEF-SW 11/11(1) SGR; JEF-SW 11/12(1) SGR; JEF-SW 11/13(1) JAW  
**TANAGER, Scarlet** JEF-SW 11/13(1) GW; JEF-SW 11/16(1) SGR; JEF-SW 11/20(1) MW  
**SPARROW, Chipping** JEF-SRSP 11/2(1) JLU; JEF-SW 11/11(1) SGR; JEF-SRSP 11/13(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/20(6) MW; JEF-SW 11/27(3) JAW; JEF-SW 11/30(8) AM  
**SPARROW, Field** JEF-SW 11/20(1) MW; JEF-SW 11/30(1) AM  
**SPARROW, Vesper** JEF-TP 11/6(1) JAW; JEF 11/12(2) GD; JEF 11/12(1) HM  
**SPARROW, Lark** JEF 11/27(5) JAW; JEF-MCFW 11/30(1) AM  
**SPARROW, Savannah** JEF 9 reps(269)  
**SPARROW, Grasshopper** JEF 11/12(1) HM; JEF 11/19(1) FTWJ  
**SPARROW, LeConte's** JEF 11/19(1) FTWJ  
**SPARROW, Nelson's Sharp-tail.** JEF 1 rep(4)  
**SPARROW, Seaside** JEF 1 rep(2)  
**SPARROW, Fox** JEF-SW 11/30(1) AM  
**SPARROW, Song** JEF 11/12(2) GD; JEF-SW 11/13(1) GW; JEF-SW 11/13(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/16(1) SGR; JEF-TP 11/19(1) FTWJ; JEF-SW 11/20(1) MW; JEF 11/30(1) AM  
**SPARROW, Lincoln's** JEF 4 reps(5)  
**SPARROW, Swamp** JEF 11 reps(48)  
**SPARROW, White-throated** JEF 7 reps(82)  
**SPARROW, White-crowned** JEF 4 reps(19)  
**JUNCO, Dark-eyed** JEF-SRSP 11/22(2) SGR  
**CARDINAL, Northern** JEF 6 reps(8)  
**GROSBEAK, Rose-breasted** JEF-SW 11/10(1) SGR  
**GROSBEAK, Blue** JEF-SRSP 11/13(2) JAW  
**BUNTING, Indigo** JEF 11/6(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 11/13(5) JAW; JEF-SW 11/13(2) JAW; JEF-SW 11/16(1) SGR; JEF-SRSP 11/20(2) MW; JEF-SW 11/20(2) MW  
**BUNTING, Painted** JEF-SRSP 11/20(1) MW  
**BLACKBIRD, Red-winged** JEF 9 reps(1086)  
**MEADOWLARK, Eastern** JEF 3 reps(27)  
**MEADOWLARK species** JEF 2 reps(6)  
**GRACKLE, Common** JEF 5 reps(102)  
**GRACKLE, Boat-tailed** JEF 6 reps(213)  
**GRACKLE, Great-tailed** JEF 6 reps(259)  
**COWBIRD, Brown-headed** JEF 2 reps(45)  
**ORIOLE, Orchard** JEF-SRSP 11/13(2) JAW  
**ORIOLE, Baltimore** JEF-SW 11/13(1) GW

**Number of Species** 179  
**Number of Individuals** 22342

**County Abbreviations:**  
 HAI - Hardin; JEF - Jefferson

**Location Codes**

MCFW - McFaddin NWR; NEDR - Nederland; 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**

AM - Art Mackinnon; FTWJ - Field Trip to West Jefferson County; GD - Gerald Duhon; GW - Scott Gremel and John Whittle; HM - John Haynes and Steve Mayes; JAW - John Whittle; JFW - Jana Whittle; JJW - John and Jana Whittle; JLU - John Lumb; JM - John Mariana; MCF - McFaddin and Texas Pt NWRs (Patrick Walther, Scott Gremel); MW - Steve Mayes and John Whittle; SGR - Scott Gremel; SM - Steve Mayes

# Effects of Hurricane Rita on Bird Populations

*In this series of articles, we examine the effects of the hurricane on birds that live in southeast Texas for at least part of the year, or pass through on migration. This part discusses the direct effects and the effects on the habitat. Later parts in future issues will discuss the effects on individual species and groups of species.*

## Direct Effects

All of us have been interested in how our bird populations fared in Hurricane Rita, the eye of which crossed the coast at the mouth of the Sabine-Neches waterway in the early morning hours of September 24. Any account of the short term effects is necessarily based on anecdotal evidence and subjective judgment, since there are too many other variables that affect both the populations and the visibility of them.

The first question is, of course, how the birds fared in the hurricane force winds. This question is quite difficult to answer, because no one was paying much attention to birds in the immediate coastal area for at least two weeks after the passage of the hurricane. Any dead birds, and probably most seriously injured birds, would certainly not been visible when people started paying attention again, having succumbed to scavengers and predators. The biggest hazard to birds was probably the danger of being blown into wires, trees and man made structures. Many small birds are accustomed to finding shelter during bad weather (such as thunderstorms) while larger birds may be more used to riding out storms in relatively more exposed locations. Although it does not seem likely to have involved a large number of birds, given the relatively small number present on the immediate coast south of the coastal marshes, there is some possibility that the strong north winds blew some land birds out to sea and almost certain death. In marsh areas, ducks may be at relatively little risk of hitting anything other than power lines and antenna structures, normally relatively sparse in marshes. Doves, on the other hand, especially the larger species that frequent urban areas, such as White-winged and Eurasian Collared-Doves, quite possibly experienced significant mortality. Eurasian Collared Dove populations seem to have declined (but will doubtless rebound), and White-winged Doves are not nearly as numerous as they were before. Rock Pigeons, however, very used to sheltering under overpasses and the like do not seem to have been affected. Large flocks of Mourning Doves were encountered in the open agricultural areas of west Jefferson County in the weeks after the hurricane, implying little overall effect on populations, but possibly some displacement from urban area to the agricultural areas.

Coastal birds such as gulls and terns tend to fly inland when a coastal storm threatens, but likely settle in relatively hazard free open areas. We know that some get "trapped" in the eyes of hurricanes and Rita was no exception. Various terns, gulls and Black Skimmers were seen on the afternoon of September 24 as far inland as southern Jasper County. But most, along with most wading birds, probably just hunkered down behind a clump of grass. Certainly, there is no evidence of a significant reduction in local populations of these species.

During the storm, in addition to our "resident" birds, there would have been some migrants in the affected area. But the numbers of such birds was probably relatively low and, if any were flying in the evening – unlikely since migrants usually

avoid the turbulence associated with high winds – they would tend first to be blown to the west by the winds north of the storm and out of the worst effects. Those that rode out the storm would probably move on, either in reaction to the unpleasant weather, or to the disruption of normal food sources in the immediate aftermath. The food may have still been there, but, for example, on the ground instead of higher up. While high winds quite likely blew a lot of insects well out to sea, it would not have been long before a new hatch would have been produced, especially in view of the rain that accompanied the storm.

## Effect on Habitat

After the storm had passed, effects on the bird populations were certainly almost exclusively movements in response to habitat changes, which changed the availability of food. On the immediate coast, the storm surge forced salt water inland. Along the Texas coast, it is a reasonably frequent occurrence for tropical storms and hurricanes passing some distance away to cause salt water to wash over the coastal dunes into the immediately coastal marshes up to the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. Each such event takes a toll on the salt intolerant emergent vegetation in the normally fresher marshes, but the marsh largely recovers in a few weeks if the salt water is flushed out by incoming fresh water. The storm surge on the east side of the hurricane – in southwest Louisiana in this case – is greater, and larger areas of marsh and the coastal cheniers were severely impacted. In Louisiana, some of the salt water crossed over the levees of the Intracoastal Waterway, and became trapped on the north side, seriously delaying any recovery. Birds have the advantage over terrestrial species of being able to cover quite large distances in a relatively short period of time, and the avian residents in the affected areas of southwest Louisiana likely moved out either northwards – likely most land birds – or westwards or eastwards – likely most waterfowl.

At the time of the hurricane, the area was in a moderate drought situation, and even the rainfall associated with the hurricane did not completely break the drought. The month or more following passage of the hurricane was unusually dry, and it was not until almost December that water levels in most of the area were anything approaching normal. The winds of the hurricane beat down any tall vegetation that was growing in any area along the coast.

The isolated coastal woodlots in southeast Texas are not "natural" – the oaks, etc. were planted – although the wooded cheniers a little further east in Louisiana were naturally colonized by these trees. Nevertheless, the effects on the woodlots are interesting. Unlike the woodlots on the cheniers in southwest Louisiana Sabine Woods was not affected by the storm surge. The debris line was right at the south boundary fence line, but the Woods themselves are appreciably higher. But there were effects. First, the entire understory – indeed

every tree, bush and forb – at Sabine Woods was defoliated, and in that respect, two weeks after the hurricane, the Woods looked much as they do in late February following a hard winter. Tree loss and damage was extensive. Hackberry trees suffered most, but trees of most species along the north edge of the woods were blown down. However, although they all lost limbs – in most cases, many big limbs – none of the old, mature live oak trees was blown down. Perhaps that is why there are many 100-year old live oaks around. The false spring that followed is also interesting. Every tree still living put out a new set of leaves. The oaks were slower to do this and less enthusiastic than other species. The mulberry trees – some of which are still alive although lying on the ground – started growing a new crop of berries! With the notable exception of giant ragweed, the forbs produced new leaves and another crop of seeds. The result was that within four to six weeks, the Woods presented a near normal array of bird habitat and food, augmented by brush piles, some natural, some the result of boardwalk and trail clearing. The variety and number of birds observed in November and December in the Woods were not sufficiently different from past year to suggest any hurricane effects. "Overshooting" migrants arriving for the winter – birds that eventually move 25 to 50 miles back north into the Big Thicket area (or continue westwards and eventually further south) – were numerous, but this happens from time to time. There were perhaps more lingering neotropical migrants – some possibly wintering – this year than normal, but this may have been a continuation of a recent trend, or might even just be due to more intensive birding of the area.

Further inland, the urban areas of Port Arthur, mid-County and Beaumont suffered much wind damage, a lot of which involved trees. Most trees lost branches, and many were felled. Clearing the trees has often necessitated clearing bushes and other "underbrush." Birds dependent on trees for food have fewer trees. Numerous piles of branches have provided secure cover for birds for a time, but the piles are being removed, and soon, cover will be less available than normal. Indeed, the lack of any "stable" situation and the frequent disturbance may have caused many birds to move out of the urban areas. There seems little doubt that the overall number of birds in the urban areas is well below normal.

Massive effects on trees extended at least 100 miles inland, and, indeed, the tree damage at Martin Dies State Park (on the Tyler/Jasper county line between Woodville and Jasper) is at least as extensive as anything nearer the coast. In the wooded areas, clearing initially is likely to be limited to removing trees that were blocking road and trails. This will leave birds with a much more stable and less disturbed habitat. Although the number of living trees has obviously been somewhat reduced, the downed trees will increase the food supply for many species, as insects tends to be more numerous on dying and dead wood. Trees which have had the entire top broken off – many pine trees suffered in this way – will provide woodpeckers with many opportunities, and Red-headed Woodpeckers, which require dead and dying trees, may increase in numbers. The effect on underbrush in the Big Thicket was not nearly as drastic as it was nearer the coast.

*In future issues we will examine the effects on individual species and groups of birds, and will have the benefit of the results of local Christmas Counts.*

## Field Trips for Disabled Birders in Maine

The American Birding Association has become aware of the need for modified field trips designed for birders with limited mobility or limited endurance. Therefore, for the first time ever, the 2006 convention in Bangor, Maine, through the Physical Limitations Track, will offer three such trips. Two of these trips will focus on land birds that can be found in accessible "hot spots" near Bangor, and in the stunning Acadia National Park. The leaders for these trips will include Victor Emanuel and Barry Lyon from Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, and Rick Wright of Aimophila Adventures. The disabled birders will join the rest of the ABA group for the third trip, which will be a boat trip to the waters surrounding Petit Manan, a breeding island used by Atlantic Puffins and other seabirds. During this trip, we will have the expertise of Wayne Peterson of Field Guides Incorporated and Massachusetts Audubon, to guide our smaller group.

For detailed information about this June 19-25, 2006, Bangor, Maine, convention, please visit the official website at [www.americanbirding.org](http://www.americanbirding.org) (click on Bangor convention, then field trips, then scroll down to the Physical Limitations Track), or contact Darlene Smyth at [smythd@comcast.net](mailto:smythd@comcast.net) or 1-520-297-2315.

## Bird Alert

Scott Gremel has been monitoring the Sabine Pass area and has seen Black and White, Magnolia and Wilson's Warbler in woodlots north of Highway 87 near the Texas Point Refuge parking lot. A Harris's Sparrow at the Willows at Sea Rim has not been seen recently, but may still be there, of course. The Burrowing Owl is again being seen at the entrance to McFaddin NWR. A first year White-tailed Hawk was along Highway 87 near the eastern boundary of Sea Rim on December 29.

An aerial survey by Patrick Walther found large numbers of Canvasback (10,000 to 12,000) on Lost Lake in Murphree WMA. There are Canvasback and good numbers of Bufflehead in the South Impoundment of Pleasure Island.

Cattail Marsh has a good variety of ducks. There have been Hooded Mergansers in Cell 1 (see [www.cattailmarsh.org](http://www.cattailmarsh.org) for map), Redheads (up to 9) and Canvasback (at least 35) in Cell 4, Bufflehead in Cells 1 and 4, a pair of American Wigeon in Cell 4. Northern Shovelers, Ruddy Ducks, Lesser Scaup, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Ducks, Northern Pintails, Mallards and Blue-winged Teal in most of the northern parts of the Marsh (cells 1 through 4). Greater Scaup can usually be found by checking all lone scaups carefully. Mottled Ducks are scarce, although present. The water in the southern half is currently deep and there are fewer ducks there. There are more than 50 American Pipits, mostly along the levee which parallels Hillebrandt Bayou. The banks of many levees have been mowed recently, but there are patches of good sparrow Habitat. There are good numbers of Savannah Sparrows and fair numbers of Swamp Sparrows. Orange-crowned Warblers and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers are present in good numbers.



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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.

<b>Golden Triangle</b>	<b>(409) 728-6957</b>
Texas (Houston)	(713) 369-9673
Abilene	Discontinued?
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Ft. Worth (N. Cent)	(817) 329-1930
Lubbock	Discontinued
N. E. Texas ?	(903) 839-4804
Rio Grande Valley	(956) 584-2731
San Antonio	(210) 308-6788
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