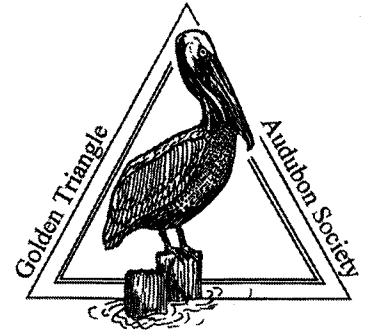


Brown Pelican

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The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 12 No. 2

February 2006

**Membership Meeting
Thursday, February 16, 2006
6:30 PM, Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont**

Birds of Northern Costa Rica

**Speaker: David Sarkozi
President, Texas Ornithological Society**

David is currently president of the Texas Ornithological Society, and has served as president of the Friends of Anahuac Refuge and Chairman of the Ornithology Group in Houston. He and his wife have been leading trips to Belize and Costa Rica for five years now, and have birded in Central American for 11 years, visiting Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, and Costa Rica. David also leads annual trips for the public at Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge for Yellow Rails

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.

January Membership Meeting

Approximately 45 members and guests were present at the Membership Meeting on January 19. Our speaker was Margaret Pickell of Wildlife Rehab and Education's oiled wildlife response team. Margaret gave a fascinating talk on the work of her group in cleaning oiled Brown Pelicans and other wildlife from the various tropical storms and hurricanes that affected coastal areas of southern Louisiana this past season. She focused principally on the Breton NWR spill.

On June 14, 2005, tropical storm Arlene hit the coast of Louisiana. In the Breton National Wildlife Refuge, thousands of birds were in the middle of nesting season. A survey done in May by biologists from Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries estimated that 4,000 Brown Pelicans and 4,600 Sandwich and Royal Terns were nesting in the West Breton Colony. The majority of the pelicans were incubating eggs and caring for their young. As the storm swept over the low island, it carried with it light crude oil that had spilled from a nearby oil rig. Even though the spill was only 12-15 barrels, the storm carried it on the waves, which swept over the low island, covering the pelican chicks with oil.

The Brown Pelican

Vol. 12, No.2 Feb 2006

Golden Triangle
Audubon Society

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SOCIETY INFORMATION
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(409) 728-6957 (728-OWLS)**

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Calendar of Events

Saturday February 11. McFaddin NWR Work Day. Hurricane Rita destroyed much of the sand fence that had been installed to promote the formation of dunes along the beach west of Sea Rim State Park. On this work day, new fence will be constructed to replace the damaged portions and extend the fence further west. Meet at the refuge maintenance area just inside the refuge on Clam Lake Road at 8 a.m. The refuge is located approximately 12 miles west of Sabine Pass on Highway 87. Contact the refuge (409-971-2909) or Stephanie Martinez or Michele Whitbeck in the refuge complex office in Anahuac (409-267-3337 for more details. Sponsored by McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge and the McFaddin and Texas Point Refuges Alliance.

Thursday February 16. Membership Meeting. Speaker: David Sarkozi, President of Texas Ornithological Society. See page 1 for more details.

Saturday February 18. Field Trip to Cattail Marsh. This trip will depart from the Parking Lot for Cattail Marsh at 8:00 a.m. The entrance to this area is about two-thirds of the way round the loop around the picnic areas at Tyrrell Park in Beaumont. To reach Tyrrell Park, take Tyrrell Park Road south from Highway 124 about a mile to the park entrance. Continue until you pass the golf clubhouse complex and then continue round the loop road to the entrance to Cattail Marsh. You can also reach the park by taking Walden Road south from IH-10 just west of Beaumont for about one-half mile and crossing straight over Highway 124 onto Tyrrell Park Road.

While you can often see many of the ducks from near the entrance gate, the intention is to walk around the northern half of the marsh. The total distance covered will be about four miles. You can turn around and retrace your path at any time up until the halfway point, after which it will be quicker to complete the circuit!

The leaders will arrive shortly after 7:00 a.m. and will lead some birding in the woods surrounding the parking area

for wintering and resident woodpecker and passerine species. The plan is to enter the marsh proper at 8:00 a.m.

Saturday March 4, 2005. Sabine Woods 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, the heavier duty the better.

Saturday March 11. Marsh Madness at McFaddin NWR. Marsh Madness is the annual day of activities at McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge, sponsored by the refuge and the McFaddin and Texas Point Refuges Alliance. There will be programs and demonstrations for children of all ages. Contact the refuge (409-971-2909) or Stephanie Martinez or Michele Whitbeck in the refuge complex office in Anahuac (409-267-3337 for more details.

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

Saturday March 18. 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 Rettillon Road. At the beach, if conditions permit, turn right (west) about 1/2 mile to the vehicle barrier. It takes at least one and a half hours to drive from the Golden Triangle; more if you bird on the way! 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. Some walking is necessary on this field trip. How much depends on how much mud flat is exposed, and this depends on both the tide and the winds that have prevailed over the previous day or so.

Saturday April 22. Field Trip Sabine Pass area. This field trip will look for migrant species in Sabine Woods and elsewhere. Minimal walking required. Full details in future issues.

Local Bird News

The Sandhill Cranes in West Jefferson County have been seen from time to time with 100 to 200 present, recently south of Lawhon Road east of South China Road. They have not been flying very much, and not very vocal.

Male Vermilion Flycatchers have been exceptionally numerous this winter -- do we have all southeast Louisiana's as well as our own? The one in west Jefferson County at 4815 Thompson Road, just south of the LNVA Canal, is by far the most reliable, but one west of the levee between Cells 2 and 3 at Cattail Marsh, nearer the north end of the levee is also fairly reliable if a lot further to walk. Others have been seen in Tyrrell Park and on Pleasure Island among other places.

Thanks to Golden Triangle Audubon

The Big Thicket National Preserve again sponsored the Turkey Creek Christmas Bird Count (December 28, 2005) and the Beech Creek Christmas Bird Count (December 30, 2005). There were ten participants for each count with nine people there for both counts.

David Baker, Bruce Bishop, Sherry Gibson, Curtis Hoagland, Harrison Jordan, Rose Ann Jordan, Ken Sztraky, John Whittle and Merle King, count organizer, were there for both counts. Larry Rowland, a resident of New York state, heard about our counts and came for the Turkey Creek count. Don Jeane participated in the Beech Creek count. Many thanks to everyone who participated. Many thanks to everyone who participated. It is a very long drive for most of you and your dedication is much appreciated.

The Turkey Creek Count total was low with several species conspicuously absent for a total of 61 species. The Beech Creek count, however, tied our second highest count (in 1991) with a

total of 91 species. Once again, thanks to all who participated. We could not have done it without you!

*Rose Ann Jordan
Volunteer/Volunteer Coordinator
Big Thicket National Preserve*

Turkey Creek unofficial tally

Wood Duck (12); Mallard (3); Pied-billed Grebe (3); Great Blue Heron (3); Great Egret (2); Black Vulture (98); Turkey Vulture (78); Red-shouldered Hawk (3); Red-tailed Hawk (2); American Kestrel (4); Killdeer (52); Eurasian Collared-Dove (2); Mourning Dove (23); Eastern Screech-Owl (1); Belted Kingfisher (1); Red-headed Woodpecker (1); Red-bellied Woodpecker (29); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (10); Downy Woodpecker (19); Hairy Woodpecker (5); Northern Flicker (10); Pileated Woodpecker (13); Eastern Phoebe (28); White-eyed Vireo (1); Blue-headed Vireo (8); Blue Jay (55); American Crow (125); Carolina Chickadee (93); Tufted Titmouse (47); Brown-headed Nuthatch (13); Brown Creeper (3); Carolina Wren (42); House Wren (5); Winter Wren (9); Golden-crowned Kinglet (11); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (58); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (1); Eastern Bluebird (99); Hermit Thrush (4); American Robin (210); Gray Catbird (5); Northern Mockingbird (12); Brown Thrasher (6); European Starling (3); Cedar Waxwing (105); Orange-crowned Warbler (12); Yellow-rumped Warbler (115); Chipping Sparrow (233); Savannah Sparrow (11); Swamp Sparrow (3); White-throated Sparrow (57); Dark-eyed Junco (1); Northern Cardinal (105); Eastern Meadowlark (13); Common Grackle (10); Boat-tailed Grackle (1); American Goldfinch (81); House Sparrow (4).

Beech Creek unofficial tally

Snow Goose (5); Goose species (26); Wood Duck (21); Gadwall (18); American Wigeon (33); Mallard (32); Northern Shoveler (3); Canvasback (51); Ring-necked Duck (12); Pied-billed Grebe (7); American White Pelican (10); Neotropic Cormorant (2); Double-crested Cormorant (37); Anhinga (3); Great Blue Heron (14); Great Egret (21); Snowy Egret (5); Tricolored Heron (2); White Ibis (14); Black Vulture (78); Turkey Vulture (74); Osprey (1); Bald Eagle (2); Northern Harrier (1); Sharp-shinned Hawk (2); Red-shouldered Hawk (11); Red-tailed Hawk (6); American Kestrel (2); Common Moorhen (2); American Coot (8); Killdeer (55); Spotted Sandpiper (1); Common Snipe (24); Forster's Tern (6); Eurasian Collared-Dove (7); Mourning Dove (68); Inca Dove (9); Belted Kingfisher (9); Red-headed Woodpecker (1); Red-bellied Woodpecker (67); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (11); Downy Woodpecker (39); Hairy Woodpecker (5); Northern Flicker (16); Pileated Woodpecker (28); Eastern Phoebe (53); White-eyed Vireo (1); Blue-headed Vireo (3); Blue Jay (89); American Crow (139); Carolina Chickadee (70); Tufted Titmouse (66); Red-breasted Nuthatch (1); Brown-headed Nuthatch (4); Brown Creeper (1); Carolina Wren (62); House Wren (9); Winter Wren (3); Sedge Wren (3); Golden-crowned Kinglet (36); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (83); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (1); Eastern


Bluebird (121); Veery (1); Hermit Thrush (1); American Robin (374); Gray Catbird (2); Northern Mockingbird (44); Brown Thrasher (4); European Starling (21); American Pipit (8); Cedar Waxwing (370); Orange-crowned Warbler (24); Yellow-rumped Warbler (373); Pine Warbler (146); Common Yellowthroat (1); Chipping Sparrow (415); Lark Sparrow (2); Savannah Sparrow (14); Fox Sparrow (2); Song Sparrow (5); Lincoln's Sparrow (2); Swamp Sparrow (20); White-throated Sparrow (100); White-crowned Sparrow (4); Dark-eyed Junco (1); Northern Cardinal (130); Red-winged Blackbird (75); Eastern Meadowlark (20).

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.

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank Sherry Gibson, Jean Hollingsworth, Tammie Mackinnon, Lynn Otto, Betsy Ray, Needa Reed, Sherrie Roden for bringing refreshments in January. We now urgently **need volunteers to bring all items for February and 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!



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

Bird Sightings – December 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: A relatively "normal" month – at least as far as any month can ever be normal, and as far as the number of species seen is concerned.– including some of the birds seen on the Turkey Creek and Beech Creek Christmas Bird Counts. Other counts in the area we cover were held in the new year, and will be included next month. The relative paucity of shorebirds reflects a lack of accessible shorebird habitat at Cattail Marsh and lack of access to Sea Rim State Park. The number of waterfowl may be slightly elevated over recent years, while some of the urban birds may be seen to be very scarce. But the area continued to be very dry throughout December, and this must also be considered when attempting to analyze the data.

GOOSE, White-fronted	JEF 1 rep(450)	EAGLE, Bald	JEF-TP 12/10(1) SM; TYL 12/30(2)
GOOSE, Snow	JEF 7 reps(3768); TYL 1 rep(5)	BCCB	
GOOSE, Ross's	JEF 12/10(5) SM; JEF-TP 12/10(2) SM; JEF-TP 12/23(1) JAW; JEF 12/27(8) JAW	HARRIER, Northern	JEF 7 reps(24)
GADWALL	JEF 4 reps(543); TYL 1 rep(10)	HAWK, Sharp-shinned	JEF 2 reps(2); TYL 1 rep(2)
WIGEON, American	JEF 1 rep(2); TYL 1 rep(1)	HAWK, Cooper's	JEF 12/18(1) JAW; JEF 12/27(1) TW
MALLARD	JEF 2 reps(37); TYL 1 rep(20)	HAWK, Red-shouldered	JEF 5 reps(10); TYL 2 reps(4)
DUCK, Mottled	JEF-TP 12/10(10) SM; JEF-TP 12/23(2) JAW; JEF-TP 12/27(4) JAW; JEF-MCFW 12/29(2) JAW	HAWK, White-tailed	JEF-TX87 12/29(1) JAW
TEAL, Blue-winged	JEF 4 reps(436)	HAWK, Red-tailed	JEF 6 reps(57)
TEAL, Cinnamon	JEF-TP 12/27(1) JAW	HAWK, Red-tailed (Krieger's)	JEF 12/27(1) TW
SHOVELER, Northern	JEF 4 reps(1543); TYL 1 rep(3)	KESTREL, American	JEF 6 reps(422); TYL 1 rep(1)
PINTAIL, Northern	JEF 4 reps(431)	MERLIN	JEF 12/3(1) JAW
TEAL, Green-winged	JEF 4 reps(923)	SORA	JEF-TP 12/10(7) SM; JEF-TP 12/27(1) JAW
CANVASBACK	JEF-TP 12/10(40) SM; JEF-TP 12/27(26) JAW; JEF-TP 12/27(28) JAW; TYL 12/30(49) BCCB	MOORHEN, Common	JEF 3 reps(12)
REDHEAD	JEF-TP 12/23(9) JAW; JEF-TP 12/27(6) JAW	COOT, American	JEF 2 reps(1511); TYL 1 rep(8)
DUCK, Ring-necked	JEF 3 reps(466)	CRANE, Sandhill	JEF 12/3(20) JAW; JEF 12/8(600) JP; JEF 12/10(750) SM; JEF 12/18(34) JAW
SCAUP, Greater	JEF-TP 12/23(1) JAW; JEF-TP 12/27(2) JAW	PLOVER, Black-bellied	JEF 2 reps(47)
SCAUP, Lesser	JEF 5 reps(885)	KILLDEER	JEF 7 reps(62); TYL 2 reps(20)
BUFFLEHEAD	JEF 2 reps(13)	STILT, Black-necked	JEF 1 rep(20)
GOLDENEYE, Common	JEF-TP 12/10(2) SM	YELLOWLEGS, Greater	JEF 4 reps(95)
MERGANSE, Hooded	JEF-TP 12/10(1) SM; JEF-TP 12/23(2) JAW; JEF-TP 12/27(1) JAW	YELLOWLEGS, Lesser	JEF 2 reps(38)
DUCK, Ruddy	JEF 3 reps(839)	SANDPIPER, Western	JEF 1 rep(25)
TURKEY, Wild	HAI 12/24(30) JP	SANDPIPER, Least	JEF 2 reps(24)
BOBWHITE, Northern	JEF 1 rep(10)	DUNLIN	JEF 1 rep(40)
GREBE, Least	JEF-TP 12/20(1) JM; JEF-TP 12/23(2) JAW	DOWITCHER, Long-billed	JEF 3 reps(819)
GREBE, Pied-billed	JEF 3 reps(36); TYL 1 rep(4)	SNIFE, Common	JEF 2 reps(13)
GREBE, Eared	JEF 1 rep(5)	WOODCOCK, American	JEF-SRSP 12/9(1) SGR; JEF 12/11(1) SM
PELICAN, Amer. White	JEF 1 rep(100)	GULL, Laughing	JEF 4 reps(588)
PELICAN, Brown	JEF-TX87 12/29(3) JAW	GULL, Ring-billed	JEF 6 reps(723)
CORMORANT, Neotropic	JEF-TP 12/23(1) JAW; JEF-TP 12/27(2) JAW; JEF-TX87 12/29(23) JAW; TYL 12/30(1) BCCB	TERN, Gull-billed	JEF 12/3(3) JAW; JEF 12/10(1) SM
CORMORANT, Double-crested	JEF 2 reps(9); TYL 1 rep(7)	TERN, Forster's	TYL 1 rep(2)
HERON, Great Blue	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 4 reps(16); TYL 2 reps(6)	DOVE, Rock	JEF 6 reps(114)
EGRET, Great	JEF 5 reps(58); TYL 1 rep(6)	COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian	JEF 2 reps(23); TYL 1 rep(6)
EGRET, Snowy	JEF 5 reps(39); TYL 1 rep(1)	DOVE, White-winged	JEF 2 reps(3)
HERON, Tricolored	JEF 4 reps(12); TYL 1 rep(1)	DOVE, Mourning	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 8 reps(283); TYL 1 rep(15)
EGRET, Cattle	JEF 1 rep(1)	DOVE, Inca	JEF 1 rep(7)
IBIS, White	JEF 12/3(63) JAW; JEF-TP 12/10(1) SM; JEF 12/18(140) JAW; JEF-TP 12/23(1) JAW	OWL, Barn	JEF-SW 12/29(1) JAW
IBIS, Glossy	JEF-TP 12/10(1) SM; JEF-TP 12/23(1) JAW; JEF-TP 12/27(1) JAW	SCREECH-OWL, Eastern	HAI 12/28(1) TCCB; JEF-NEDR 12/16(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 12/17(1) JAW
IBIS, White-faced	JEF 12/10(400) SM; JEF-TP 12/10(50) SM; JEF-TP 12/23(12) JAW; JEF-TP 12/27(9) JAW	OWL, Burrowing	JEF-MCFW 12/29(1) JAW; JEF-MCFW 12/30(1) TW
IBIS, Plegadis	JEF 12/3(42) JAW; JEF-TP 12/23(7) JAW; JEF-TP 12/27(6) JAW	OWL, Barred	JEF 12/11(1) SM
VULTURE, Black	HAI 1 rep(5); JEF 6 reps(44); TYL 2 reps(9)	WILL'S-WIDOW, Chuck-	JEF-SW 12/9(1) SGR
VULTURE, Turkey	HAI 1 rep(6); JEF 6 reps(56); TYL 2 reps(23)	HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous	JEF-NEDR 12/17(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 12/18(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 12/23(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 12/25(1) JW
KITE, White-tailed	JEF 2 reps(4)	HUMMINGBIRD, <i>Selasphorus</i>	HAI 12/21(1) JM
		HUMMINGBIRD species	HAI 12/8(1) JM
		KINGFISHER, Belted	JEF 5 reps(13); TYL 1 rep(2)
		WOODPECKER, Red-bellied	HAI 1 rep(3); JEF 6 reps(14); TYL 2 reps(15)
		SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 2 reps(2); TYL 2 reps(7)
		WOODPECKER, Downy	HAI 1 rep(3); JEF 9 reps(16); TYL 2 reps(10)

WOODPECKER, Hairy HAI 12/28(2) TCCB
 FLICKER, Northern HAI 1 rep(3); JEF 2 reps(4); TYL 1 rep(5)
 WOODPECKER, Pileated HAI 1 rep(3); JEF 1 rep(2); TYL 2 reps(6)
 PHOEBE, Eastern HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 8 reps(52); TYL 2 reps(14)
 FLYCATCHER, Vermilion JEF 12/3(1) JAW; JEF 12/10(1) SM; JEF 12/18(2) JAW; JEF-TP 12/20(1) JM; JEF 12/27(2) TW; JEF-TP 12/27(1) JAW
 SHRIKE, Loggerhead JEF 7 reps(72)
 VIREO, Blue-headed HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 1 rep(1); TYL 2 reps(2)
 JAY, Blue HAI 1 rep(3); JEF 4 reps(15); TYL 2 reps(11)
 CROW, American HAI 1 rep(7); JEF 3 reps(6); TYL 2 reps(23)
 CROW, Fish JEF-TP 12/23(33) JAW
 CROW, species JEF 1 rep(5)
 SWALLOW, Tree JEF-TP 12/10(15) SM; JEF 12/23(2) JAW; JEF-TP 12/23(16) JAW
 CHICKADEE, Carolina HAI 1 rep(7); JEF 4 reps(11); TYL 2 reps(23)
 TITMOUSE, Tufted HAI 1 rep(6); TYL 2 reps(10)
 NUTHATCH, Brown-headed HAI 12/28(2) TCCB; TYL 12/28(4) TCCB
 CREEPER, Brown TYL 12/30(1) BCCB
 WREN, Carolina HAI 1 rep(5); JEF 3 reps(10); TYL 2 reps(14)
 WREN, House HAI 12/28(1) TCCB; JEF 12/10(2) SM; JEF 12/18(1) JAW
 WREN, Winter HAI 12/11(1) JM; JEF-TP 12/10(1) SM; TYL 12/30(1) BCCB
 WREN, Sedge JEF 12/10(7) SM; JEF-TP 12/10(8) SM
 WREN, Marsh JEF-TP 12/10(6) SM
 KINGLET, Golden-crowned JEF-SW 12/4(1) X; JEF-SRSP 12/9(12) SGR; JEF-SW 12/9(5) SGR; JEF-TP 12/10(1) SM; JEF-SW 12/14(10) SG; JEF-TP 12/27(2) JAW; TYL 12/30(15) BCCB
 KINGLET, Ruby-crowned HAI 1 rep(4); JEF 8 reps(30); TYL 2 reps(31)
 GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray JEF 4 reps(15); TYL 1 rep(1)
 BLUEBIRD, Eastern JEF 3 reps(7); TYL 2 reps(22)
 THRUSH, Hermit HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 2 reps(2)
 ROBIN, American HAI 12/28(49) TCCB; JEF-NEDR 12/2(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 12/3(2) JAW; JEF-NEDR 12/27(2) JAW; JEF-SRSP 12/29(1) JAW; TYL 12/28(8) TCCB; TYL 12/30(27) BCCB
 CATBIRD, Gray JEF-SW 12/4(1) X; JEF-SW 12/29(1) JAW
 MOCKINGBIRD, Northern JEF 9 reps(58); TYL 2 reps(8)
 THRASHER, Brown JEF 1 rep(4); TYL 1 rep(2)
 STARLING, European JEF 7 reps(596)
 PIPIT, American JEF 4 reps(143); TYL 1 rep(7)
 WAXWING, Cedar HAI 1 rep(10); TYL 2 reps(41)
 WARBLER, Orange-crowned HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 7 reps(29); TYL 2 reps(5)
 WARBLER, Yellow-rumped HAI 1 rep(16); JEF 9 reps(61); TYL 2 reps(52)
 WARBLER, Black-thr. Green JEF-SW 12/9(1) SGR; JEF-SW 12/14(1) SGR
 WARBLER, Pine HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 6 reps(18); TYL 2 reps(49)
 WARBLER, Prairie JEF-SW 12/4(1) X; JEF-SW 12/14(1) SGR; JEF-SW 12/28(1) X
 YELLOWTHROAT, Common JEF 4 reps(12)
 SPARROW, Chipping JEF 3 reps(58); TYL 2 reps(55)
 SPARROW, Field JEF-TP 12/10(2) SM
 SPARROW, Vesper JEF 12/10(1) SM
 SPARROW, Savannah JEF 5 reps(403)
 SPARROW, Song JEF 5 reps(6); TYL 1 rep(4)
 SPARROW, Lincoln's TYL 1 rep(1)
 SPARROW, Swamp HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 3 reps(90); TYL 1 rep(12)
 SPARROW, White-throated JEF 3 reps(29); TYL 1 rep(27)

SPARROW, Harris's JEF-SRSP 12/9(1) SGR
 SPARROW, White-crowned JEF 2 reps(8)
 CARDINAL, Northern HAI 1 rep(7); JEF 5 reps(59); TYL 2 reps(24)
 BLACKBIRD, Red-winged JEF 5 reps(5792); TYL 1 rep(22)
 MEADOWLARK, Eastern JEF 3 reps(19)
 MEADOWLARK species JEF 3 reps(16)
 BLACKBIRD, Brewer's JEF 12/18(21) JAW
 GRACKLE, Common JEF 2 reps(102)
 GRACKLE, Boat-tailed JEF 3 reps(128)
 GRACKLE, Great-tailed JEF 7 reps(668)
 COWBIRD, Brown-headed JEF 4 reps(25107)
 ORIOLE, Bullock's JEF 12/26(2) GD
 GOLDFINCH, American HAI 1 rep(7); JEF 4 reps(19); TYL 1 rep(92)
 SPARROW, House JEF 3 reps(29)

Number of Species 149
 Number of Individuals 53000

County Abbreviations:
 HAI – Hardin; JEF – Jefferson; TYL – Tyler.

Location Codes
 BMT – Beaumont; MCFW – McFaddin NWR; NEDR – Nederland; SRSP – Sea Rim State Park; SW – Sabine Woods; TP – Tyrrell Park including Cattail Marsh; TX87 – Texas 87 Pt. Arthur-Sabine Pass-Sea Rim SP

Observer Abbreviations
 BCCB – Beech Creek CBC; GD – Gerald Duhon; JAW – John Whittle; JJW – John and Jana Whittle; JM – John Mariana; JP – John Park; SGR – Scott Gremel; SM – Steve Mayes; TCCB – Turkey Creek CBC; TW – Tex Wells; X – Unknown

Bird Alerts

Art Mackinnon reported a Little Gull among some Bonaparte's Gulls along McFaddin Beach on the closed part of the road on January 21. He also reported seeing the Burrowing Owl at the entrance to McFaddin NWR.

In Cattail Marsh on January 22 were 18 species of duck, including a Long-tailed Duck (a.k.a. Oldsquaw). The Long-tailed Duck was found first in the southern part of Cell 3 – see map at www.cattailmarsh.org. It later moved to the southern part of Cell 4. Look for a duck with a mostly white head. Long-tailed Duck plumages are numerous and somewhat variable, but this may be a female. It has a dark crown, and a very dark patch below the ear.

Also in Cattail Marsh were one or two female Common Goldeneye (south part of cells 3 and 4), a male Cinnamon Teal (north part of Cell 2 near extensive patches of water hyacinth), Canvasbacks (northern halves of cells 4, 3 and 2), and Redheads (at least 15 in the northern half of cell 4). Bufflehead were in cells 2,3 and 4, and Mallards were everywhere in the northern part of the Marsh. At least one Wigeon was in cell 4. Pintails are greatly reduced in number, and Blue-winged Teal are slowly replacing Green-winged Teal, although there are plenty of both. Mottled Duck, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler (large numbers), Ring-necked Duck and both Lesser and Greater Scaup were also seen.

John Mariani reported a female Broad-tailed Hummingbird along with a Selasphorus (Rufous or Allen's) species at his feeders in Lumberton January 15 and 16. Rose Ann Jordan reports a Rufous, a Black-chinned and a Broad-tailed Hummingbird in north Beaumont.

See also the bird notes on page 3 for details of some other local bird happenings.

The Ivory-bill Chronicles, Chapter I

John C. Arvin, Research Coordinator, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

[The Chronicles are designed to keep the public informed about this important project. They will be issued serially at irregular intervals. This was originally posted to the TEXBIRDS listserv on January 20.]

Last April 27th I received one of the most exciting messages of my life. A friend who was "in the know" sent me a flash e-mail that on the following day he and a group of fellow researchers would publish in the prestigious journal *Science*, the news that at least one Ivory-billed Woodpecker had survived sixty years of presumed extinction and had been conclusively documented in eastern Arkansas. The next day it was officially announced to the world by no less than the Secretary of the Interior that the Ivory-bill lived! I immediately sat down and dashed off a draft proposal to search that part of the historical range of the species in Texas in which I thought that enough of the right kind of bottomland forest existed that might support a very small population of this charismatic symbol of Americana Lost.

Certainly the Ivory-billed Woodpecker is not the only avian tragedy in American history. The Labrador Duck, Great Auk, Passenger Pigeon, and even temperate America's only native parrot, the colorful Carolina Parakeet, were all tragic losses, but for some reason these just do not evoke the same visceral reaction from me, the same sense of loss, as does the giant woodpecker. From boyhood I had fantasized about the bird, which was last recorded with certainty about the time I was born. I had virtually memorized "the bible", James Tanner's report of the natural history of the last known population of Ivory-bills in the infamous Singer Tract in northeastern Louisiana in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Unknown to me until fairly recently is that there is a sizeable body of people, dreamers like me I suppose, who have been fixated with the Ivory-bill for the greater portions of their lives, and who have sought out and followed up on every report, hint, or rumor of the great bird that came their way. Finally there is something real out there, and not the ghost we feared, to chase. So here we go, chasing our dream.

From the outset Cliff Shackelford, a long time birding buddy and Texas Parks & Wildlife's state ornithologist, has been in on every aspect of the project. He is a natural, being a woodpecker biologist with a strong love of the southern forests and their birds. It was my first instinct to run the first draft proposal by Cliff, and he has been an integral part of the project ever since.

I received the news earlier this week that my proposal to seek Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in Texas had been funded - not quite fully funded, but with enough to start the chase. My reaction was elation laced with a certain amount of misgivings, and also with a sense of awesome responsibility. I have been entrusted with a considerable sum of public money, your money, to look for something that may not exist. And if it doesn't exist, or at least if our efforts do not provide compelling evidence that it does, will the public look upon

those efforts as just another frivolous waste? I hope not, and our every effort will be to come away from this project with a lot of newly acquired knowledge of the ecology of southern bottomland hardwood forests and the role of the most dramatic symbol within that system. But that is the risk you take when you chase dreams.

So now what? Many of the preliminary steps that must be taken before we can actually put people on the ground (or water) to begin the search could not be taken before we had money to take them. So those steps must be now taken, and quickly. Time ticks away. The grant is for 2006 and the precious window of time when the bottomland forests are leafless is already about a fourth gone by. One of the first steps we will take will be to make reconnaissance flights over the search areas, which are the corridors of bottomland forest along the lower Trinity, Neches, and Sabine Rivers in southeastern Texas. From the air we will identify those areas that appear to have large, intact tracts of mature forest so that they can be marked for priority ground searches. At the same time we will be watching for the birds themselves. A flying Ivory-billed Woodpecker, viewed from above, should be quite conspicuous from a low, slow-flying aircraft. Additionally we will be watching for lookout points from which stationary watchers can see long stretches along streams or other breaks in the forest that would make likely corridors for Ivory-bills moving about within their huge home ranges. Most of the Arkansas sightings have been at such places. When these features have been identified from the air we will begin ground surveys. Present funding has forced us to cut back to one single full time search team. We will be needing volunteers to fill in the gaps of our coverage. Information about volunteering will be forthcoming, but probably not for a few weeks yet, as all this is still quite new and we are scrambling to work out the details.

Whether as paid searcher or volunteer, the ground search will be no picnic. When I first envisioned the project the search areas were merely filled with usual impediments - lack of ready access points, a bewildering winding of waterways through swamp forests with no shortage of mosquitoes and the occasional Cottonmouth, tangles of thorny green brier and poison ivy, and seemingly bottomless mud. All these were relegated to relatively minor nuisances with the passage of Hurricane Rita in September, cutting right through the heart of the region. I have visited some of the search areas since Rita and downed trees range from a minimum of about 20% to as high as 75% in some of the hardest hit areas. Cross country navigation through the tangled vegetation is going to be a nightmare in some areas. The good news is that all evidence suggests that the Ivory-bill is a "disaster" species, shifting its home range over vast areas of forest in response to the transitory presence of large numbers of recently dead or dying trees. Their primary animal food source, the large boring grubs of long-horned beetles, infests such trees in the early stages of decay. Rita has insured an abundant source of these grubs for the foreseeable future.

Field Trip to West Harris County -- January 21, 2006

A chance of rain was predicted for the day of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society's annual field trip to the Katy Prairie and the land definitely needed the moisture. This prime birding area west of Houston was in a serious drought as a dozen birders prepared to explore its avian wonders and that drought would definitely affect the outcome of the day's birding.

Birding started in Bear Creek Park. This partly wooded area sandwiched between Bear Creek and a large golf course regularly produces a number of birds that are otherwise hard to find on the upper Texas coast. Species like Rusty Blackbird, Purple Finch and Winter Wren are regular here in the winter and the group started off looking for them. Along the way, numerous other nice birds were seen. Chickadees and Titmice (or is it Titmouses?) were common as were Eastern Bluebirds. Several Merlins were well seen through scopes and Golden-crowned Kinglets and a Brown Creeper proved reasonably cooperative. Two different Red-headed Woodpeckers (an adult and an immature) were spotted. American Robins, scarce in the Golden Triangle so far this winter, were around in abundance. Both of the wintering Baltimore Orioles (rare this time of year) previously reported from the park were seen with the immature cooperating for most of the group while the adult male was only seen by one person.

Unfortunately, other target birds remained elusive. Vermilion Flycatcher did not show, though with several easily seen in Jefferson County, this was not too disappointing. The Rusty Blackbirds were not in their (mostly dry) swampy area as they had been earlier in the winter. And despite the best efforts of Bear Creek Park regular Jim Hinson, the Purple Finches also remained hidden.

The group spent far more time in Bear Creek Park than usual and a lunch break was declared after leaving the park. After lunch, the auto tour of the Katy Prairie began (better late than never). The first stop was a small patch of woods that has produced Great Horned Owl on several past trips. Sure enough, the eagle eyes of Sherrie Roden spotted one of these large nocturnal raptors as soon as we stopped the cars. Everyone eventually got great scope looks at this beautiful bird.

Longenbaugh Road was next on the agenda. This is one of the best locations on the Katy Prairie as, on one end of the road, there are fields and hedgerows that produce many sparrows, wrens and other song birds while on the other end of the road, flooded fields usually yield hundreds of waterfowl, shorebirds and often a Bald Eagle or two. The fields and hedgerows did their part, showing a couple of Harris's Sparrows along with Song Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow and many White-crowned Sparrows. The other end of the road looked to be a big disappointment at first. The normally flooded fields were bone dry as a result of the continuing drought and the big flocks of ducks, geese and shorebirds normally seen were absent. Without the hundreds of birds as potential prey, it looked like we would strike out on good raptors here as well. A dark raptor spotted on the ground dispelled this idea quickly. At first, it was thought to be an immature Bald Eagle. But scope views showed the bill was too small and the plumage did not look quite right. How about Golden Eagle? The group's momentary excitement over this possibility was dashed as well as that i.d. also did not quite fit. The bird's identity was finally pinned down for sure when it sprang into the air and revealed itself to be a beautiful adult Harlan's Hawk! This subspecies of the Red-tailed Hawk is rarely seen in coastal Texas and its dark plumage with a few white specks along with a grayish (no hint of red) tail were enough to confirm it.

Other stops along fields, hedgerows and creek crossings gave the group more good birds but also a few misses. Distant views were had of White-tailed Hawks and Crested Caracaras along with plenty of the more common raptors like Red-tailed Hawks and Northern Harriers. A Barn Owl flushing from a small copse of trees was a welcome surprise. More Harris's Sparrows were spotted along with

Chipping Sparrows. Several groups of Brewer's Blackbirds were seen feeding in fields and pastures. A Northern Flicker flew in front of the group making sure everyone could tell it was of the eastern, "Yellow-shafted" variety. Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped Warblers were seen well along with other common birds like Downy Woodpeckers and Ruby-crowned Kinglets. One wet field finally provided some waterfowl and shorebirds for the group though the numbers paled in comparison to what is usually seen on this trip. Still, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shovelers, Lesser Yellowlegs and lots of Wilson's Snipe entertained the birders for a while.

But can you really call it a successful Katy Prairie trip with no geese? No Sandhill Cranes? No Bald Eagle? All of these species were missing as many decided to call it a day and make the long drive back toward the Golden Triangle area. The group also failed to locate the Great Kiskadees that have taken up residence in the area or the previously reported Bewick's Wren or Fox Sparrow. Thinking that some misses are inevitable, the last remaining birders decided to head to Pattison Road to try to end the day by finding the reported Short-eared Owls that were missed on last year's trip. Coming down the back roads, persistence paid off! The group was able to watch as over 300 Sandhill Cranes eventually flew over their heads. Not to be outdone, a few thousand Snow Geese, mixed in with Greater White-fronted and probably Canada Geese, gave distant views. Then something put the geese to flight. That something proved to be a young Bald Eagle! That would have been a good enough ending for any trip but the Katy Prairie had one treat left. Just before dark, that elusive Short-eared Owl appeared flying like a giant moth over the fields! Now that's the way to end a field trip!

As the group departed in their vehicles, a light rain began to fall. Hopefully, it is the start of a wetter time for the prairie, a chance for it to heal itself and get back to providing food and shelter for the thousands of birds that call it home. I think it likely that the group will go back next year just to see how it all turns out. And I bet, that more people stay until the end on that trip!

The following species were recorded on the trip:

Greater White-fronted Goose (80); Snow Goose (5200); Canada Goose (3); Gadwall (4); American Wigeon (3); Mallard (5); Blue-winged Teal (4); Northern Shoveler (4); Northern Pintail (108); Green-winged Teal (21); Great Blue Heron (5); Great Egret (1); *Plegadis* species Ibis (50); Black Vulture (8); Turkey Vulture (7); Bald Eagle (1 imm); Northern Harrier (6); Red-shouldered Hawk (1); White-tailed Hawk (2); Red-tailed Hawk (14); Red-tailed (Kriger's) Hawk (1); Red-tailed (Harlan's) Hawk (1); Crested Caracara (4); American Kestrel (4); Merlin (3); Sandhill Crane (370); Killdeer (124); Greater Yellowlegs (2); Lesser Yellowlegs (25); Long-billed Curlew (3); Western Sandpiper (100); Common Snipe (26); Mourning Dove (16); Barn Owl (1); Great Horned Owl (1); Short-eared Owl (2); Belted Kingfisher (1); Red-headed Woodpecker (2); Red-bellied Woodpecker (6); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (3); Downy Woodpecker (3); Northern Flicker (2); Pileated Woodpecker (1); Eastern Phoebe (6); Loggerhead Shrike (9); Blue-headed Vireo (3); Blue Jay (27); American Crow (9); Swallow species (1); Carolina Chickadee (10); Tufted Titmouse (5); Brown Creeper (1); Carolina Wren (5); Marsh Wren (1); Golden-crowned Kinglet (2); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (7); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (1); Eastern Bluebird (9); American Robin (26); Northern Mockingbird (7); Brown Thrasher (2); European Starling (33); American Pipit (1); Cedar Waxwing (12); Yellow-rumped Warbler (12); Pine Warbler (27); Chipping Sparrow (4); Vesper Sparrow (2); Savannah Sparrow (7); Song Sparrow (1); Lincoln's Sparrow (1); Swamp Sparrow (2); Harris's Sparrow (4); White-crowned Sparrow (10); Northern Cardinal (8); Red-winged Blackbird (20); Eastern Meadowlark (1); Meadowlark species (14); Brewer's Blackbird (40); Great-tailed Grackle (3); Brown-headed Cowbird (200); Blackbird species (50); Baltimore Oriole (2); American Goldfinch (29); House Sparrow (16)

Steve Mayes

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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
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