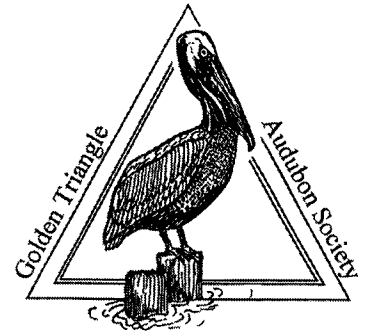


# *Brown Pelican*

**Scanned from Originals**

# The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 12 No. 5

May 2006

**Thursday, May 18, 2006  
6:30 PM, Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont  
Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge**

**Speaker: Shaun Sanchez, Manager  
Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge**

Shaun Sanchez recently moved to take up the position of Refuge Manager at Anahuac NWR. However, he will talk primarily about the famous Bosque del Apache Refuge in Socorro, NM, famous as a wintering ground for huge numbers of Sandhill Cranes and many species of waterfowl.

Shaun is originally from Las Vegas, New Mexico where he attended New Mexico Highlands University and received a B.S. in Biology. He began his career with FWS in the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP Student) and, as a SCEP, worked at Buenos Aires NWR in southern Arizona and Las Vegas NWR in northern New Mexico.

His first permanent position was at Bosque Del Apache NWR in New Mexico. He was the Assistant Refuge Manager for nearly three years and was heavily involved in habitat restoration projects. He primarily dealt with invasive species issues – salt cedar – as well as riparian restoration and moist soil/wetland management. While at Bosque, he was responsible for the writing and implementation of various management plans. He also worked with the 130+ volunteers on everything from the Festival of the Cranes to habitat restoration projects.

Shaun's next move was to Salt Plains NWR in Northwestern Oklahoma where he served as assistant refuge manager. He was involved in habitat restoration efforts -- again dealing with salt cedar -- moist soil/wetland management, and tall grass prairie management.

As usual, the doors will open no later than 6:30 p.m., but the talk will start at 7:00 p.m. approximately.

## *The Brown Pelican*

Vol. 12, No.5 May 2006

Golden Triangle  
Audubon Society

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

[www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org)

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## Calendar of Events

**Saturday May 13. North American Spring Migration Count.** Contact John Whittle (john.whittle@lamar.edu or 409-722-4193) to volunteer to help in this county-wide count. Note that this is again the day before Mother's Day! We try to cover all of Jefferson County.

**Thursday May 18. Membership Meeting.** Shaun Sanches on "Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge." See page 1 for details.

**Saturday June 3. Field trip to Hardin County.** We plan to run a field trip to Hardin County to look for the nesting species of the area – Hooded, Pine, Prairie and Swainson's Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, Indigo and Painted Bunting, Gray Catbird, Summer Tanager, Acadian Flycatcher, Brown-headed Nuthatch and others.

The meeting place will be at 7:00 a.m. (note the necessary early start!) at the shopping center on the northeast corner of the intersection of FM92 and FM418 in the northern part of Silsbee. To reach this from Beaumont, take US 69 north and then US96 north. Take **Business 96** into and through downtown Silsbee. When Business 96 turns right a short distance after crossing the railroad, continue straight ahead on FM92 for about a mile to the shopping center. There is a Bealls, a Dominos and an O'Reilly Auto Parts store in the center. We will bird the Firetower Road/Gore Store Road/Camp Waluta area and any nearby areas that are brought to our attention as being productive. We will probably finish before noon.

For those interested in Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Bachman's Sparrow, we would recommend a trip to Boykin Springs, site 007 on the UTC Birding Trail. For further details see [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/birdingtrails/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/birdingtrails/) As you drive in heading west from Texas 63 north of Jasper along Forest Road 313, after two or three miles, there is a marked Red-cockaded Woodpecker colony on the north side of the road with a marked trail through it. The area on the north side of FR313 just before you reach the colony is excellent Bachman's Sparrow habitat.

**Thursday August 17. Membership Meeting.** See August *Brown Pelican* for details

## Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank Jana Whittle and Sherrie Roden and several for bringing the refreshments in April, and several members who contributed towards the costs. We also **need volunteers to bring all items for all Fall 2006 meetings, starting in August.** 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 Alerts

During spring migration, any Bird Alert we attempted to print here will be far out of date by the time you receive it. The latest alert is always posted at [www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org)



**Earth Share**  
OF TEXAS

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>

## Sabine Woods -- Help Requested!

We normally try to schedule a Work Day at Sabine Woods in mid to late May to deal with the spring growth. Unfortunately, this year, scheduling difficulties make it impossible to arrange a formal "coordinated" work day at Sabine Woods.

However, most of what needs to be done can be accomplished by individuals working alone or in small groups, and we will welcome any and all offers to do that at any time that suits your convenience. The following are tasks that need to be accomplished in approximate order of urgency:

1. Mow the main trail around the old growth woods. A riding lawnmower would definitely be best, but it can be done with "ordinary" mowers. Either way, set the cut height near the maximum.
2. "Trim" the trails in the Woods themselves and the edges of the main trails outside the woods. Good pruning shears or "loppers" are ideal. Do not hesitate to cut back a good distance on the sides of the trails and overhead. The trees and other vegetation will grow during the summer!
3. Deal with trees and large branches which have fallen or moved in a way that threatens the boardwalk or trails since we cleared after the hurricane. There is one good-sized hackberry across one trail and several large branches have descended from other trees. A chain saw – especially a pole saw – would be very helpful.
4. As always, cutting mustang grape vine, and, where it is getting out of hand on trees, Japanese honeysuckle, will help keep the oaks healthy.

If you are able to help, please give either me (409-722-4193 (H) or 409-880-8276 (W) or Steve Mayes (409-722-5807 (H)) a call, but note that both of us will be out of the country in the first half of June. (In any case, we think it is probably too hot to do much in June, July or August.) Either of us can give you any further guidance that you need. Any help you are able to provide will be very much appreciated by both Golden Triangle Audubon and the Texas Ornithological Society.

## Birdathon!

We thank those of you who supported our Birdathon to benefit Audubon Texas. We hope by the time that you read this our supporters will have our report of the 155 species that we found during a very productive day of birding. If you would like to make a contribution now that you know how many species we found, please send to check, payable to Audubon Texas, to Golden Triangle Audubon at P.O. Box 1292, Nederland, Texas 77627-1292. All contributions are, of course, tax deductible.

*Royce Pendergast and John A. Whittle*

## New National Audubon Society Report Lists America's 10 Most Endangered Birds

*The Full report, photos and maps for downloading, and additional background materials may be accessed online at: [www.audubon.org/news/top10/index.php](http://www.audubon.org/news/top10/index.php)*

**Washington, March 27, 2006** – The gravest threat facing endangered bird species in the U.S. today is proposed Congressional action to weaken the protections of the Endangered Species Act, according to a report released by the National Audubon Society. "America's Top Ten Most Endangered Birds" notes that development pressures, invasive species, and global warming are threatening these bird species with extinction. The Endangered Species Act is described as "the strongest federal safeguard against the extinction of bird species in the U.S." "Congress needs to do everything possible to save these imperiled birds before it is too late," said Betsy Loyless, Audubon's Senior Vice President for Public Policy. "Unfortunately all the effort in Congress is focused on cutting holes in the Endangered Species Act." The report is expected to attract strong attention from conservation-minded Americans, including 46 million bird-watchers in the U.S.

### Top 10 Endangered Birds and their Habitats

The birds named in the report are:

Ivory-billed Woodpecker; California Condor; Whooping Crane; Gunnison Sage-Grouse; Kirtland's Warbler; Piping Plover; Florida Scrub-Jay; Ashy Storm-Petrel; Golden-cheeked Warbler; Kittlitz's Murrelet; and ten island birds of Hawaii. Their habitats span the entire East Coast and are dotted across the nation, in Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin.

### Endangered Species Act Under Attack

Since its enactment more than 30 years ago, the Endangered Species Act has been profoundly successful in protecting species, including our national symbol, the Bald Eagle. The Endangered Species Act is a safety net that has saved dozens of species from becoming extinct. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the act has prevented the extinction of 99 percent of the species listed as endangered or threatened. In addition, 68% of listed species are stable or improving. The longer a species is listed under the Act, the more likely it is to be improving.

Audubon released the report as the Senate actively considers legislation that, if passed, would undermine the vital protections provided to endangered birds by the Endangered Species Act. In September 2005, the House passed HR 3824, sponsored by Congressman Richard Pombo (R-CA). This bill, euphemistically called "The Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery Act," eliminates protection for critical habitat; creates loopholes allowing projects to proceed regardless of impacts on endangered birds and wildlife; provides highly controversial payments to landowners as compensation for complying with the law; and includes special exemptions for pesticide manufacturers.

Ninety bird species are listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The National Audubon Society report focuses on the most imperiled birds nationwide and appeals for efforts to ensure their survival.

## Bird Sightings – March 2006

**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 report on early anecdotal impressions of this year's spring migration season appears elsewhere in this issue. Looking at the entries below would suggest a rather "normal" beginning to the season. However, looking more closely one can see that there were no days with large numbers of the early migrating warblers – Northern Parula, Yellow-throated, Prothonotary and Hooded – even though the number of days on which each species was sighted was certainly well within normal limits.

Cattle Egrets were slow to return, but many other species put in relatively early appearances. As always, we plan a thorough analysis of the numbers early in the fall.

<b>WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous</b>	JEF-MCFW 3/11(3) HW	<b>HAWK, Cooper's</b>	JEF-TP 3/26(1) SM
<b>GOOSE, Snow</b>	JEF 1 rep(28)	<b>HAWK, Red-shouldered</b>	JEF 3 reps(4)
<b>GADWALL</b>	JEF 5 reps(66)	<b>HAWK, Swainson's</b>	JEF 3/26(1) SM
<b>MALLARD</b>	JEF 1 rep(2)	<b>HAWK, Red-tailed</b>	JEF 15 reps(36)
<b>DUCK, Mottled</b>	JEF-MCFW 3/1(16) GD; JEF 3/5(2)	<b>CARACARA, Crested</b>	JEF 3/1(2) GD; JEF 3/12(1) JAW
JAW; JEF 3/12(2) JAW; JEF-SW 3/19(1) SM; JEF-SW 3/20(1)		<b>KESTREL, American</b>	JEF 15 reps(31)
SM; JEF 3/21(8) JAW; JEF-SW 3/25(3) SM; JEF 3/26(2) SM;		<b>MERLIN</b>	JEF 3/26(1) SM
JEF-TP 3/26(6) SM		<b>RAIL, Clapper</b>	JEF 1 rep(2)
<b>TEAL, Blue-winged</b>	JEF 8 reps(276)	<b>SORA</b>	JEF 3 reps(24)
<b>SHOVELER, Northern</b>	JEF 2 reps(623)	<b>MOORHEN, Common</b>	JEF 5 reps(34)
<b>TEAL, Green-winged</b>	JEF 1 rep(70)	<b>COOT, American</b>	JEF 3 reps(565)
<b>CANVASBACK</b>	JEF-MCFW 3/1(200) GD	<b>PLOVER, Black-bellied</b>	JEF 4 reps(148)
<b>DUCK, Ring-necked</b>	JEF 1 rep(6)	<b>GOLDEN-PLOVER, American</b>	ANG 3/29(6) NB; JEF 3/21(200)
<b>SCAUP, Lesser</b>	JEF 2 reps(158)	JAW; JEF 3/26(30) SM; JEF-TP 3/26(25) SM	
<b>DUCK, Long-tailed</b>	JEF-MCFW 3/1(1) GD	<b>PLOVER, Snowy</b>	JEF 3/11(2) SM; JEF-SRSP
<b>GOLDENEYE, Common</b>	JEF-MCFW 3/1(3) GD	3/25(2) SM	
<b>MERGANSER, Red-breasted</b>	JEF 1 rep(2)	<b>PLOVER, Semipalmated</b>	JEF 1 rep(5)
<b>DUCK, Ruddy</b>	JEF 2 reps(210)	<b>PLOVER, Piping</b>	JEF 1 rep(1)
<b>LOON, Common</b>	JEF 1 rep(1)	<b>KILLDEER</b>	JEF 7 reps(115)
<b>GREBE, Least</b>	JEF-TP 3/26(1) SM	<b>STILT, Black-necked</b>	JEF 6 reps(453)
<b>GREBE, Pied-billed</b>	JEF 5 reps(36)	<b>YELLOWLEGS, Greater</b>	ANG 1 rep(1); JEF 8 reps(795)
<b>GREBE, Eared</b>	JEF 1 rep(1)	<b>YELLOWLEGS, Lesser</b>	JEF 8 reps(486)
<b>GANNET, Northern</b>	JEF 3/1(4) GD	<b>WILLET</b>	JEF 4 reps(93)
<b>PELICAN, Amer. White</b>	JEF 5 reps(502)	<b>SANDPIPER, Spotted</b>	JEF 1 rep(2)
<b>PELICAN, Brown</b>	JEF 3/1(55) GD; JEF-TX87 3/4(7)	<b>CURLEW, Long-billed</b>	JEF 2 reps(48)
MW; JEF 3/10(2) JFW; JEF-TX87 3/11(3) HW; JEF-TX87		<b>KNOT, Red</b>	JEF-MCFW 3/11(12) HW; JEF-
3/13(7) JAW; JEF-SRSP 3/25(15) SM		MCFW 3/19(1) SM; JEF-MCFW 3/25(4) SM	
<b>CORMORANT, Neotropic</b>	JEF 9 reps(136)	<b>SANDERLING</b>	JEF 4 reps(432)
<b>CORMORANT, Double-crested</b>	JEF 5 reps(28)	<b>SANDPIPER, Western</b>	JEF 6 reps(262)
<b>ANHINGA</b>	JEF 3 reps(5)	<b>SANDPIPER, Peep</b>	JEF 1 rep(100)
<b>BITTERN, American</b>	JEF-MCFW 3/1(1) GD	<b>SANDPIPER, Least</b>	JEF 6 reps(503)
<b>HERON, Great Blue</b>	JEF 6 reps(15)	<b>SANDPIPER, Pectoral</b>	ANG 3/29(3) NB; JEF-MCFW
<b>EGRET, Great</b>	JEF 16 reps(599)	3/11(1) HW; JEF 3/12(40) JAW; JEF-MCFW 3/19(2) SM; JEF	
<b>EGRET, Snowy</b>	JEF 10 reps(215)	3/21(100) JAW; JEF-MCFW 3/25(3) SM; JEF 3/26(50) SM;	
<b>HERON, Little Blue</b>	JEF 7 reps(86)	JEF-TP 3/26(75) SM	
<b>HERON, Tricolored</b>	JEF 8 reps(18)	<b>DUNLIN</b>	JEF 7 reps(225)
<b>EGRET, Cattle</b>	JEF 3 reps(29)	<b>SANDPIPER, Stilt</b>	JEF 3/21(15) JAW; JEF-TP 3/26(1)
<b>HERON, Green</b>	JEF-TP 3/26(1) SM; JEF-SRSP	SM	
3/28(40) GD; JEF-SW 3/30(4) JAW		<b>DOWITCHER, Short-billed</b>	JEF-MCFW 3/1(63) GD
<b>NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crowned</b>	JEF-MCFW 3/11(1) HW; JEF-SW	<b>DOWITCHER, Long-billed</b>	JEF 3 reps(581)
3/19(2) SM; JEF-SRSP 3/20(10) SM		<b>DOWITCHER species</b>	JEF 4 reps(28)
<b>IBIS, White</b>	JEF 7 reps(118)	<b>SNIPE, Common</b>	JEF 7 reps(13)
<b>IBIS, White-faced</b>	JEF-MCFW 3/1(114) GD; JEF-SW	<b>GULL, Laughing</b>	JEF 12 reps(2988)
3/25(15) SM; JEF-TP 3/26(20) SM		<b>GULL, Bonaparte's</b>	JEF 2 reps(26)
<b>IBIS, Plegadis</b>	JEF-TX87 3/19(25) JAW; JEF	<b>GULL, Ring-billed</b>	JEF 8 reps(922)
3/22(20) JAW; JEF-TX87 3/30(1) JAW		<b>GULL, Herring</b>	JEF 7 reps(45)
<b>SPOONBILL, Roseate</b>	JEF-MCFW 3/1(22) GD; JEF-TXPT	<b>TERN, Gull-billed</b>	JEF-MCFW 3/1(1) GD
3/10(1) JFW; JEF-TX87 3/19(2) JAW; JEF-TXPT 3/19(10) SM;		<b>TERN, Caspian</b>	JEF 3 reps(6)
JEF-SW 3/20(2) SM; JEF-TX87 3/20(5) SM; JEF-TX87 3/25(5)		<b>TERN, Royal</b>	JEF 4 reps(171)
SM; JEF-TXPT 3/25(4) SM		<b>TERN, Sandwich</b>	JEF 3/1(3) GD; JEF-MCFW 3/11(2)
<b>VULTURE, Black</b>	JEF 9 reps(26)	HW	
<b>VULTURE, Turkey</b>	JEF 14 reps(77)	<b>TERN, Common</b>	JEF 3/1(1) GD
<b>OSPREY</b>	JEF-MCFW 3/1(2) GD; JEF-TXPT	<b>TERN, Forster's</b>	JEF 6 reps(154)
3/19(1) SM; JEF-TX87 3/20(1) SM; JEF-TP 3/26(1) SM		<b>DOVE, Rock</b>	JEF 8 reps(72)
<b>KITE, Swallow-tailed</b>	ORA 3/31(3) AC	<b>COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian</b>	JEF 6 reps(20)
<b>KITE, White-tailed</b>	ANG 1 rep(1); JEF 2 reps(5)	<b>DOVE, White-winged</b>	JEF 14 reps(56)
<b>EAGLE, Bald</b>	JEF-TP 3/26(1) SM	<b>DOVE, Mourning</b>	JEF 21 reps(179)
<b>HARRIER, Northern</b>	JEF 14 reps(36)	<b>CUCKOO, Yellow-billed</b>	JEF-SRSP 3/25(1) SM
<b>HAWK, Sharp-shinned</b>	JEF-SW 3/1(1) GD		

**OWL, Great Horned** JEF-SW 3/4(1) MW; JEF-SW 3/11(1) SM; JEF-SW 3/20(1) SM; JEF-SW 3/25(1) SM  
**OWL, Burrowing** JEF-MCFW 3/1(1) GD  
**SWIFT, Chimney** JEF-SW 3/20(1) SM  
**HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-throated** JEF-BMT 3/8(1) RAJ; JEF-BMT 3/9(1) RAJ; JEF-NEDR 3/11(1) HW; JEF-NEDR 3/19(2) JAW; JEF-SW 3/20(2) SM; JEF-NEDR 3/23(1) JAW  
**HUMMINGBIRD, Black-chinned** JEF-BMT 3/9(1) RAJ  
**HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous** JEF-NEDR 3/4(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 3/5(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 3/6(1) JAW  
**HUMMINGBIRD, *Selasphorus*** HAI 3/26(1) JM  
**HUMMINGBIRD species** JEF-NEDR 3/1(1) JAW  
**KINGFISHER, Belted** JEF 10 reps(14)  
**WOODPECKER, Red-bellied** JEF 2 reps(2)  
**SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied** JEF 3 reps(5)  
**WOODPECKER, Downy** JEF 8 reps(14)  
**PHOEBE, Eastern** JEF 11 reps(41)  
**FLYCATCHER, Vermilion** JEF-TX87 3/20(1) SM  
**FLYCATCHER, Gt. Crested** JEF-SW 3/18(1) GD; JEF-SW 3/19(1) GD  
**KINGBIRD, Eastern** JEF-SW 3/18(1) GD; JEF-SW 3/22(2) JHH; JEF-SW 3/25(4) SM; JEF-TP 3/26(1) SM; JEF-SW 3/30(5) JAW  
**FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tailed** JEF-SW 3/18(1) GD; JEF-SRSP 3/20(2) SM; JEF-SW 3/20(2) SM; JEF-SW 3/22(2) JHH  
**SHRIKE, Loggerhead** JEF 10 reps(54)  
**VIREO, White-eyed** JEF 12 reps(109)  
**VIREO, Yellow-throated** HAI 3/25(1) JM; JEF-SW 3/19(1) SM; JEF-SW 3/20(1) SM; JEF-SRSP 3/25(1) SM; JEF 3/26(3) GD; JEF-SRSP 3/28(2) GD; JEF-SRSP 3/29(3) JHH  
**VIREO, Blue-headed** JEF 9 reps(12)  
**VIREO, Red-eyed** JEF-SW 3/25(1) SM; JEF 3/26(1) GD; JEF-SRSP 3/28(1) GD  
**JAY, Blue** JEF 7 reps(23)  
**CROW, American** JEF 1 rep(1)  
**CROW, Fish** JEF-SW 3/4(1) MW; JEF-SW 3/25(3) SM; JEF 3/26(5) GD; JEF 3/26(5) SM  
**CROW, species** JEF 10 reps(47)  
**MARTIN, Purple** JEF 9 reps(119)  
**SWALLOW, Tree** JEF 10 reps(2697)  
**SWALLOW, Barn** JEF 18 reps(82)  
**SWALLOW species** JEF 1 rep(20)  
**CHICKADEE, Carolina** JEF 6 reps(13)  
**WREN, Carolina** JEF 12 reps(21)  
**WREN, House** JEF-SW 3/3(2) JLU; JEF-SRSP 3/19(1) SM; JEF-SW 3/25(1) SM  
**WREN, Sedge** JEF-MCFW 3/1(4) GD  
**WREN, Marsh** JEF-MCFW 3/1(18) GD; JEF-TXPT 3/25(2) SM; JEF-TP 3/26(1) SM  
**KINGLET, Golden-crowned** JEF-SW 3/4(3) MW  
**KINGLET, Ruby-crowned** JEF 11 reps(60)  
**GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray** JEF 11 reps(75)  
**BLUEBIRD, Eastern** JEF 3 reps(5)  
**THRUSH, Hermit** JEF 3 reps(5)  
**THRUSH, Wood** JEF-SRSP 3/11(1) SM  
**ROBIN, American** JEF 14 reps(26)  
**CATBIRD, Gray** JEF-SW 3/1(1) GD; JEF-SW 3/4(1) MW; JEF-SW 3/11(1) SM; JEF-SW 3/13(1) JAW; JEF-SW 3/19(1) SM; JEF-SW 3/20(3) SM; JEF-SW 3/25(4) SM; JEF-SW 3/30(1) JAW  
**MOCKINGBIRD, Northern** JEF 14 reps(71)  
**THRASHER, Brown** JEF 6 reps(14)  
**STARLING, European** JEF 8 reps(78)  
**WARBLER, Tennessee** JEF-SRSP 3/29(1) JHH  
**WARBLER, Orange-crowned** JEF 16 reps(49)  
**WARBLER, Nashville** JEF-SW 3/14(1) GD  
**PARULA, Northern** HAI 3/20(1) JM; JEF-SW 3/1(1) GD; JEF-TXPT 3/11(1) SM; JEF-SW 3/14(3) GD; JEF-SW 3/14(3) JAW; JEF-SW 3/18(2) GD; JEF-SRSP 3/19(2) GD; JEF-SRSP 3/19(1) SM; JEF-SW 3/19(3) SM; JEF-TXPT 3/19(1) SM; JEF-SRSP 3/20(1) SM; JEF-SW 3/20(2) SM; JEF 3/22(2) JHH; JEF-SW 3/22(2) JHH; JEF-SRSP 3/25(1) SM; JEF-SW 3/25(1) SM; JEF 3/26(5) GD; JEF 3/26(8) SM; JEF-SRSP 3/28(15) GD; JEF-SW 3/28(10) GD; JEF-SRSP 3/29(15) JHH  
**WARBLER, Yellow-rumped** JEF 21 reps(397)

**WARBLER, Black-thr. Green** JEF-SW 3/1(1) GD; JEF-SW 3/2(1) LS; JEF-SW 3/3(1) JHH; JEF-SW 3/11(1) SM; JEF-SRSP 3/18(1) GD; JEF-SRSP 3/19(1) SM; JEF-SW 3/19(1) GD  
**WARBLER, Yellow-throated** JEF-SW 3/3(1) JHH; JEF-SW 3/3(2) JLU; JEF-SW 3/14(2) GD; JEF-SW 3/22(2) JHH; JEF-SW 3/25(1) SM; JEF-SRSP 3/28(2) GD; JEF-SW 3/30(1) JAW  
**WARBLER, Pine** JEF 3 reps(42)  
**WARBLER, Prairie** JEF-SW 3/1(1) GD; JEF-SW 3/3(1) JHH; JEF-BMT 3/22(1) RAJ  
**WARBLER, Palm** JEF-SW 3/19(1) SM; JEF-TXPT 3/19(1) SM; JEF-SRSP 3/25(1) SM; JEF-TXPT 3/25(1) SM  
**WARBLER, Black-and-white** JEF-SRSP 3/1(1) GD; JEF-SW 3/1(1) GD; JEF-SW 3/3(2) JLU; JEF-SW 3/4(1) MW; JEF-SW 3/14(2) GD; JEF-SW 3/18(1) GD; JEF-SRSP 3/19(2) SM; JEF-SW 3/19(3) SM; JEF-SRSP 3/20(2) SM; JEF-SW 3/20(5) SM; JEF-SW 3/22(3) JHH; JEF-SW 3/25(6) SM; JEF-SRSP 3/28(3) GD; JEF-SRSP 3/29(8) JHH; JEF-SW 3/30(1) JAW  
**WARBLER, Prothonotary** JEF-SW 3/22(2) JHH; JEF-SRSP 3/25(3) SM; JEF-SW 3/25(6) SM; JEF-SRSP 3/28(2) GD; JEF-SRSP 3/29(4) JHH  
**WARBLER, Worm-eating** JEF-SRSP 3/28(13) GD; JEF-SW 3/28(1) GD; JEF-SRSP 3/29(2) JHH  
**WATERTHRUSH, Louisiana** HAI 3/26(1) JM; JEF-SW 3/20(1) SM; JEF-SRSP 3/28(1) GD; JEF-SW 3/28(1) GD; JEF-SRSP 3/29(1) JHH  
**WARBLER, Kentucky** JEF-SRSP 3/29(1) JHH  
**YELLOWTHROAT, Common** JEF 9 reps(30)  
**WARBLER, Hooded** JEF-SW 3/14(1) GD; JEF-SW 3/14(1) JAW; JEF-SW 3/18(2) GD; JEF-SRSP 3/19(1) GD; JEF-SW 3/19(2) GD; JEF-SW 3/19(1) SM; JEF-SW 3/20(2) SM; JEF-SW 3/22(2) JHH; JEF-SRSP 3/28(1) GD; JEF-SRSP 3/29(5) JHH; JEF-SW 3/30(1) JAW  
**TANAGER, Scarlet** JEF-SRSP 3/28(1) GD  
**TOWHEE, Eastern/Spotted** JEF-SW 3/13(1) JAW  
**SPARROW, Chipping** JEF 1 rep(1)  
**SPARROW, Savannah** JEF 9 reps(154)  
**SPARROW, Nelson's Sharp-tail.** JEF 4 reps(16)  
**SPARROW, Seaside** JEF 2 reps(7)  
**SPARROW, Song** JEF 4 reps(7)  
**SPARROW, Lincoln's** JEF 4 reps(13)  
**SPARROW, Swamp** JEF 5 reps(51)  
**SPARROW, White-throated** JEF 12 reps(75)  
**CARDINAL, Northern** JEF 7 reps(25)  
**BUNTING, Indigo** JEF-SW 3/28(1) GD  
**BLACKBIRD, Red-winged** JEF 13 reps(2928)  
**MEADOWLARK, Eastern** JEF 8 reps(33)  
**MEADOWLARK species** JEF 4 reps(15)  
**GRACKLE, Common** JEF 4 reps(140)  
**GRACKLE, Boat-tailed** JEF 10 reps(351)  
**GRACKLE, Great-tailed** JEF 17 reps(435)  
**GRACKLE, Gt./Boat-tailed** JEF 2 reps(12)  
**COWBIRD, Brown-headed** JEF 2 reps(50)  
**ORIOLE, Orchard** JEF-SRSP 3/28(4) GD  
**FINCH, House** HAI 3/26(2) JM  
**GOLDFINCH, American** JEF 12 reps(89)  
**SPARROW, House** JEF 10 reps(57)

**Number of Species** 178  
**Number of Individuals** 23225

**County Abbreviations:**

ANG – Angelina; HAI – Hardin; JEF – Jefferson; ORA – Orange

**Location Codes**

BMT – Beaumont; 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**

AC – Alice Cornwell; CSL – Christine Sliva; GD – Gerald Duhon; HW – Margo Holst, John Whittle; JAW – John Whittle; JFW – Jana Whittle; JHH – John H. Haynes; JJW – John and Jana Whittle; JLU – John Lumb; JM – John Mariana; LS – Lloyd (Pappy) Snyder; MW – Steve Mayes and John Whittle; NB – Nancy Bird; RAJ – Rose Ann Jordan; SM – Steve Mayes; SRJW – Sherrie Roden and John Whittle.

# Spring Songbird Migration 2006

by Steve Mayes

*We are grateful to Steve Mayes for preparing this account of Spring Songbird Migration even before the migration period had ended. Steve's account focuses exclusively on Passerine species, and on the time line of events. The "Bird Sightings" for April, necessarily somewhat condensed, will appear in the June issue, and we plan to present our usual numerical, day-by-day analysis of sightings in the September issue. Ed.*

Every spring migration is different. Some are spectacular, others slow. Then there are those that defy easy descriptions. This spring has definitely been radically uneven and there is no better example of that than the birding events of Saturday April 29th.

Spring migration always starts off slowly. This is the nature of the beast, the early migrants start to trickle in, slowing building to greater numbers. The earliest of our migrants (e.g. Purple Martins) may arrive by late January but "true" spring migration starts in March. This is when the birders get out and start looking for Northern Parulas, Black and White Warblers and Louisiana Waterthrushes among other early migrants.

Usually, you can count on a few pretty big days in March, especially toward the end of the month. A front may bring down 15 or more species of warblers with Great Crested Flycatchers, White-eyed Vireos and Summer Tanagers thrown in. But this past March, the birding picture was not so rosy. It wasn't just that there was a lack of fronts but there was a lack of water in general as the upper Texas coast was still stuck in a drought. Perhaps more importantly, strong south winds were blowing nearly every day. This kept the migrants flowing right over the usual coastal woodlots, probably not stopping until they were tens, perhaps hundreds, of miles inland.

Normally easy to find species like Black and White Warblers were scarce. The normally ubiquitous and bold Hooded Warblers were few and far between. The less common species of early migration (but still, usually easily seen) like Yellow-throated Warbler and Louisiana Waterthrush were practically non-existent. Even easy, noisy birds like Eastern Kingbird and White-eyed Vireo were less obvious than normal.

March 19th saw only eight species of warbler, most of those wintering birds. A handful of Hooded Warblers, Northern Parulas and Black and White Warblers represented the migrants. The next day was no better though a single Louisiana Waterthrush put in an appearance. March 25th also saw only eight warblers despite a light wind out of the north. This is a good lesson, as a north wind will only bring in migrants if the birds actually leave the Yucatan. Storms or other unfavorable weather conditions can keep the migrants bottled up in Mexico. Still, a few Prothonotary Warblers and Yellow-throated Warblers were seen on the day.

When April rolled in, birders hoped for a change in their fortune – no such luck. By now, Blue-winged Warblers, Worm-eating Warblers and Red-eyed Vireos should be

showing up in numbers. Instead, April 1st saw only one Worm-eating Warbler and we have no reports of either of the other two species. Another week passed but the results were the same. April 9th saw the warbler count barely breaking into double digits. The south winds were just not persuading the birds to come down.

The morning hours of Saturday, April 29th started out with a similar problem. With howling south winds, birds were extremely difficult to locate. There were birds around as evidenced by some good birding days in the previous week but finding them when the tree branches were in constant, sometimes violent, motion was quite a challenge. Far fewer birders than might normally be expected on the last Saturday in April (traditionally looked upon as the peak of spring migration) were willing to brave the extreme conditions at Sabine Woods or "The Willows" at Sea Rim State Park for such little reward.

But there were some rewards for the dedicated few who stuck it out. Baltimore Orioles in brilliant black and orange could be seen in the trees while tiny Ruby-throated Hummingbirds fought the wind to drain nectar from the local wildflowers. Tennessee Warblers worked the oak trees while bold Black-throated Green Warblers inspected the birders at close range. A few Hooded Warblers reluctantly showed themselves while Black and White Warblers were a bit easier to see. It was tough work (if you can call bird watching "work") but there were some birds to be had. Though, they were nothing compared to what was to come later in the day.

In the week or so prior to April 29th, the birding had finally started to pick up. As the peak of spring migration was entered, even south winds could not keep a decent number and diversity of species from dropping into the oaks at Sabine Woods and The Willows, mulberries and salt cedars that line Highway 87 west of Sabine Pass. April 21st saw a good push of migrants with Cerulean Warbler and Blackpoll Warbler putting in appearances.

April 22nd was the day of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society's April field trip and it was one of the better such trips in recent memory. Over twenty species of warbler were seen in the Sabine Pass area along with other migrants. Scarlet Tanager, Painted Bunting, Swainson's Warbler and Magnolia Warbler all delighted the birding group. Too often in the past, the Golden Triangle Audubon's April field trip seemed to coincide with the slowest birding day of the year but this year, multiple Yellow Warblers, Gray-cheeked Thrushes and Indigo Buntings broke that curse!

April 26 – 28 saw more good birding. Over 20 species of warbler were recorded on some of these days including such sought after warblers as Chestnut-sided Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler and Canada Warbler and non-warblers like Blue Grosbeak, Acadian Flycatcher and Bobolink. Still, the low numbers of some of the migrants being seen, including Red-eyed Vireo, Prothonotary Warbler and Worm-eating Warbler was disturbing. It seems that the bulk of these species had already passed through without bothering to stop in our beloved coastal refuges.

It is easy to get the wrong impression on a good day in the spring when Sabine Woods or Boy Scout Woods is filled with migrants. It is easy to think that they stop at these hotspots because they are such great habitat for them. The truth is a bit different, however. The birds stop in these refuges only because they have to. It's not that these coastal woodlots are poor habitat; many people have worked very hard for years to make them good habitat for migrating birds. It's just that they are small, limited habitats and there are thousands, perhaps millions of birds that come through these areas. It is amazing that a small patch of woods like Sabine Woods can hold as many birds as it does during the spring because there is just not much habitat. That is why the birds, given the choice, will move further inland before stopping. Inland, there is much more habitat and the birds can spread out. This means less competition with other birds and a better chance at survival. Birds generally stop in the coastal refuges for one of two reasons: Bad weather or weakness. A bird that stops at Sabine Woods in the spring when a strong south wind is blowing is probably not very fit. Bad weather, on the other hand, can dump every bird coming through into the woods not matter how strong and healthy.

This explains much of what has happened this spring and what happened on April 29th. With roaring south winds for the first half of migration, very few birds stopped on the coast. As birders, we lament this because it makes these flying jewels difficult for us to see and enjoy but as bird lovers, we should celebrate it. The strong south winds make it easier for the birds to migrant and allows more birds to survive. That's more birds to see next year! Similarly, on the morning of the 29th, strong south winds made the birds very difficult to see.

And there is no telling what you might see in the spring on the coast. As poor as the first half of migration was for bird watching, it was made up for in the quality of birds that began to show up in April. Black-whiskered Vireos were among the first of the unusual parade of rarities to fall into the Sabine Pass area. At least two individuals of this species, normally seen in Florida and the tropics, turned up, one each at Sabine Woods and the Willows. With several birds reported elsewhere in the state (including Smith Oaks), it seems to be a banner year for this bird. Next, a beautiful Hermit Warbler was a one-day wonder at The Willows at Sea Rim on April 17th. This golden-faced, west coast bird has only been reliably recorded in the Sabine Pass area once before. Perhaps the bird that created the most excitement was a Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher that showed up at Sabine Woods on April 18th. This large flycatcher belongs in southeastern Arizona along a mountain stream not in our humid oak mottes! Luckily, this bird decided to spend a few days with us and, although the bird became increasingly flighty and nervous, many people saw this rarity. Around this same time, a male Cape May Warbler was also enjoyed by many at Sabine Woods. On April 29th (more about that day later), a Gray Kingbird put in a brief appearance along Clam Lake Road (the entrance road) at McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge. This Caribbean species has only five previous accepted records in Texas, although it is more common in Louisiana. The bird was well photographed for documentation, which is good because, unfortunately, it disappeared within a hour or so of being found. The rarities did not end there, though! On April 30th, a Yellow-green Vireo, a relative of the Red-eyed from the tropics, turned up at

Sabine Woods as did a Black-headed Grosbeak, the western counterpart to the more familiar Rose-breasted Grosbeak. For a "slow" spring, Jefferson County definitely had more than it's share of rarities this year. Weather can explain parts of it (a convenient west wind or east wind to blow in strays) but much of it is just luck. Good luck for us!

So what did happen on April 29th, 2006? One of the best fallouts in recent memory! The morning was somewhat slow with those strong south winds but the storm was coming. A strong line of thunderstorms moved in from the west around noon packing heavy rains and wind gusts of 40 to 50 miles per hour. Luckily, it blew through Sabine Pass quickly doing little damage to that already devastated community. Getting out right after the storm passed, things seemed little different than in the morning. When the winds calmed, many a wet and bedraggled looking bird came out to enjoy the sun and find a bite to eat. It was good birding but not spectacular. But something started to happen as time went on. More birds started showing up, mostly warblers. Here a beautiful Golden-winged Warbler, there a fiery orange Blackburnian Warbler. And by the late afternoon, birds were dropping from the skies into Sabine Woods, the Willows and all along the Texas Coast! Eight or nine species of warbler were bathing at the drip at Sabine Woods at once along with Gray Catbirds and Baltimore Orioles. Dozens moved through The Willows especially along the western end of the boardwalk. The woods were covered in Magnolia Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, Tennessee Warblers, American Redstarts, Yellow Warblers and Black and White Warblers. Though warblers seemed to make up the bulk of the fall out, other birds, including many Baltimore Orioles, good numbers of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and a few *Empidonax* Flycatchers dropped in as well. With a dozen species in view at once, it was often hard to pick one bird to look at! Vireos finally put in a good appearance as well with Yellow-throated, Red-eyed, White-eyed, and good numbers of Philadelphia and Warbling Vireos dropping in. Yellow-billed Cuckoo was seen along with Eastern Wood-Pewee and Swainson's and Gray-cheeked Thrushes. And there was that Gray Kingbird as well ...

Slow then spectacular. That sums up both the birding on April 29th and our spring migration so far this year. The early spring was disappointing to the birders (not to the birds) with few of our normally easy species to enjoy. Early on the 29th, the severe winds made birding extremely difficult. As the spring wore on more birds began to show with spectacular rarities (Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Hermit Warbler) dropping in on our shores. On the 29th, as the afternoon wore on, hundreds of birds began dropping out of the skies to fill the trees along with some great rarities (Gray Kingbird). It's funny how one day can parallel our migration like this but it certainly teaches we birders one thing. Whether it's one day or the whole season, don't give up too soon! You never know when the flood of migrants will arrive or some rare vagrant will stop in to thrill the patient birders who stayed! And one more thing, it ain't over yet! Though the peak of migration may have passed by the time you are reading this, many migrants will continue to pass through our area, albeit mostly without stopping on the coast, throughout May. Birds like Mourning Warbler, Canada Warbler, Hudsonian Godwit and many of our flycatchers are very late migrants and can still be seen. So get out there and bird!



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## RARE BIRD ALERTS

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