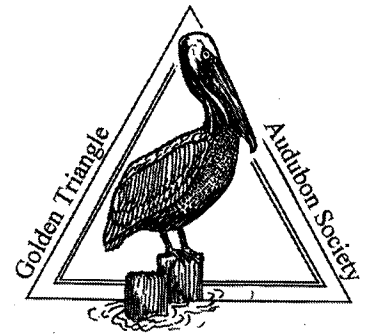


# *Brown Pelican*

**Scanned from Originals**

# The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 13 No. 1

January 2007

**Membership Meeting**  
**Thursday, January 18, 2007**  
**6:30 PM, Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont**

**Bird Photography**  
**Don Jeane**

To start off the New Year, our own expert, Don Jeane, will present a program on bird photography. Don will touch on composition of pictures, exposure and the equipment used. And, of course, he will talk about where the find birds to photograph. He will also discuss the advantages and disadvantages of digital versus film. One of Don's pictures, of a Great Egret taken at a rookery in Port Arthur, won first place at the South Texas State Fair in 2006. Don has graciously donated a print of that picture as a door prize for this meeting.

As usual, the doors will be open no later than 6:30 p.m., but the talk will start at 7:15 p.m. approximately.

## Editorial

What will be the conservation issues of 2007? Globally and locally? Our focus is on birds and their habitats, but clearly the overarching global issue will be climate change. The rise in carbon dioxide concentrations cannot be disputed by any rational person. That the immediate response to this has been and is an increase in the average surface temperature of the earth also seems beyond question. Beyond that, prediction of and even definitive detection of secondary effects – the responses of the earth's physical and chemical systems to that increase – and their direction and magnitude is less straightforward, and subject to genuine scientific uncertainty. No matter what, it must be clear that we must wean ourselves from producing energy by combustion of fossil fuels. For many reasons other than merely climate change, including geopolitical and emissions considerations, we need to start this process soon. We thus need to examine the environmental consequences of the alternatives. In coastal Texas, we will doubtless be faced with more proposals for wind farms. While urgency has been artificially injected into many projects by a potentially expiring tax credit, it is clear that siting of wind farms (and their supporting infrastructure) needs careful consideration so as not to seriously adversely impact birds, especially during migration. Studies that necessarily take time may well be necessary. Wind farms are also generating significant opposition on aesthetic grounds, and, some, perhaps not entirely unbiased, have concluded that wind power can never be economically viable because of the lack of control of when it is available.

Otherwise, issues locally will likely continue to revolve around land use and development. On the coastal plain, essentially all undeveloped land is important bird habitat. In addition, even after Hurricanes Rita and Katrina, it is not clear that local political leaders understand that wetlands are more than just habitat for birds and other wildlife, but are important in absorbing storm surge. We must continue to oppose any and all attempts to drain wetlands, or to engage in sprawling development on other valuable habitat.

## *The Brown Pelican*

Vol. 13, No.1 January 2007

Golden Triangle  
Audubon Society

See Web Site for more  
information  
[www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org)

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## Calendar of Events

**Thursday January 18. Membership Meeting.** Speaker: Don Jeane on Bird Photography. See front page for details

**Saturday January 20. Field Trip to Katy Prairie/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 continuing construction may not be well signposted, and may require an early exit onto the service road. 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 Jan. 18 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. It is a two and one-half hour 105-mile drive from the Golden Triangle.

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 January 18.

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 15, 2007. Membership Meeting.** Speaker: Ted Eubanks on birds of the Upper Texas Coast. Ted is one of the authors (with Bob Behrstock and Ron Weeks) of

*Birdlife of Houston, Galveston, and the Upper Texas Coast*, a detailed account of the occurrence and distribution of bird species in the area..

**February 16 through 19. Great Backyard Bird Count.** Full details at available at [www.birdsource.org/gbbc/](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/) This site has or will have all the details of how to submit a checklist. Results from last year are also available.

**Saturday February 17. Field Trip.** See next month's *Brown Pelican* for the location and other details.

## Election Results

At the annual meeting on November 16, 2006, the following were elected to the positions indicated for the calendar year 2007 term. (Jeff Pittman's term as President extends through the end of 2007.)

Vice-President: Steve Mayes

Treasurer: Don Jeane

Secretary: John Whittle

Directors-at-large: Sherry Gibson, Dr. Frank Giglio, Joe Halbrook, John Haynes, Jeannie Lanclos, Sherrie Roden, Christine Sliva, and Jana Whittle.

## 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.



**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 [esbt@earthshare-texas.org](mailto:esbt@earthshare-texas.org).

## Sea Rim State Park Christmas Count – 31 December 2006

Sunday, December 31 dawned clear if somewhat chilly as participants began to make their way to their assigned areas. Conditions remained favorable throughout the day, and contributed to the high number of species recorded, four more than the previous high. The number of individual birds was also quite high and not influenced by any large numbers of blackbirds of the various species. The count was marked by finding six species never before seen on the count: Cackling Goose, Harris's Hawk, Burrowing Owl, Western Kingbird, White-breasted Nuthatch and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. The account below is highly abridged, and a more complete account is posted on the website at [www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org).

Almost all parties reported a disappointing showing of ducks. Texas Point NWR had more ducks that we have seen in the past few counts, but these did not make up for the lack elsewhere. For the first time ever, we did not find any Canvasbacks, rather disappointing after several years with multiple thousands. Only one Bufflehead was seen. On the plus side, a Common Goldeneye, a species we are able to find in only about half the counts, was found. Blue-winged Teal and Mottled Ducks were the only ducks with noteworthy numbers. A Long-tailed Duck was seen from the beach at Sea Rim. Both Surf and Black Scoter were also seen from the Sea Rim Beach. Geese, on the other hand, were plentiful.

Two *Aechmophorus* grebes (Western or Clark's) were seen in the surf from the eastern part of Texas Point NWR, while the Sea Rim party saw ten Gannets offshore.

Observers on the coastal sectors of the count circle reported Red-tailed Hawks were plentiful, and the overall totals were on the high side of normal. The Harris's Hawk was a nice addition, perhaps portending a range extension of yet another "Valley" species.

We have always had difficulty in this circle finding good shorebird habitat. We did find two Whimbrels along Texas Point beach where we have come to expect them, and two more were seen flying in the interior of the refuge. But the pleasant surprise in this same area was 50 Long-billed Curlews and 40 Marbled Godwits, as well as at least 10 Stilt Sandpipers, sundry gulls and Caspian Terns.

We did well with owls. We expect to find Barn Owl and Great Horned Owls in Sabine Woods, but there were examples elsewhere. A Barn Owl flushed from the marshes in Texas Point in an area where there is a high density of muskrat mounds. A Barred Owl was seen on a wooded inland chenier for only the fourth record on the count. A Burrowing Owl was discovered on the beach at Texas Point.

In the flycatcher family, we are now becoming accustomed to finding Vermilion Flycatchers, with two seen this year. A Western Kingbird, not entirely unprecedented on the coast in "early" winter, was nice to find, nonetheless.

Prairie Warbler has become our most reliable wintering species, and we found one and also a Black-and-white Warbler. The cold snap in early December may explain why we were able to find well over a thousand American Robins after missing the species altogether last year. This has been the year of the Brown Creeper, so three, while nice, was perhaps not surprising. The White-breasted Nuthatch on the other hand, was definitely not expected. Interesting was a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak flushed by the airboat in the extreme south eastern sector of McFaddin refuge.

We thank Gene Cox and the staff at Sea Rim State Park for allowing us access to the otherwise closed park, Jim Sutherland for allowing us access to Murphree WMA, and, from McFaddin and Texas Point NWRs, Dean Bossert and especially Patrick Walther for providing the four-wheeler and airboat and skillfully transporting us throughout Texas Point and the part of McFaddin that is in the count circle.

The following listing is preliminary and subject to change after the area leaders have reviewed the data. Birds recorded: GOOSE, Greater White-fronted (91); GOOSE, Snow (6160); GOOSE, Snow (White) (8521); GOOSE, Snow (Blue) (2542); GOOSE, Ross's (15); GOOSE,

Cackling (11); GOOSE, Canada (65); GADWALL (206); WIGEON, American (7); MALLARD (4); DUCK, Mottled (109); TEAL, Blue-winged (128); SHOVELER, Northern (264); PINTAIL, Northern (74); TEAL, Green-winged (750); DUCK, Ring-necked (12); SCAUP, Lesser (956); SCAUP, Species (90); SCOTER, Surf (14); SCOTER, Black (3); DUCK, Long-tailed (1); BUFFLEHEAD (1); GOLDENEYE, Common (1); MERGANSER, Hooded (8); MERGANSER, Red-breasted (34); DUCK, Ruddy (60); DUCK, species (168); LOON, Common (5); GREBE, Pied-billed (25); GREBE, Horned (1); GREBE, Eared (1); GREBE, *Aechmophorus* (2); GANNET, Northern (10); PELICAN, American White (1046); PELICAN, Brown (75); CORMORANT, Neotropic (122); CORMORANT, Double-crested (89); ANHINGA (28); BITTERN, American (3); HERON, Great Blue (88); EGRET, Great (339); EGRET, Snowy (176); HERON, Little Blue (11); HERON, Tricolored (48); EGRET, Cattle (1); HERON, Green (2); NIGHT-HERON, Black-crowned (3); NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crowned (24); IBIS, White (578); IBIS, White-faced (29); IBIS, Plegadis species (622); SPOONBILL, Roseate (82); VULTURE, Black (27); VULTURE, Turkey (62); OSPREY (11); KITE, White-tailed (10); HARRIER, Northern (44); HAWK, Sharp-shinned (7); HAWK, Cooper's (4); HAWK, Harris's (1); HAWK, Red-shoudered (13); HAWK, Red-tailed (48); CARACARA, Crested (3); KESTREL, American (11); MERLIN (1); FALCON, Peregrine (2); RAIL, Clapper (2); RAIL, Virginia (4); SORA (1); RAIL, species (3); MOORHEN, Common (44); COOT, American (341); PLOVER, Black-bellied (81); PLOVER, Snowy (45); PLOVER, Semipalmated (7); PLOVER, Piping (12); KILLDEER (173); STILT, Black-necked (150); AVOCET, American (86); YELLOWLEGS, Greater (35); YELLOWLEGS, Lesser (26); WILLET (83); SANDPIPER, Spotted (4); WHIMBREL (4); CURLEW, Long-billed (61); GODWIT, Marbled (50); TURNSTONE, Ruddy (19); SANDERLING (335); SANDPIPER, Western (28); SANDPIPER, Least (27); DUNLIN (327); SANDPIPER, Stilt (10); SANDPIPER species (75); DOWITCHER, species (18); SNIPE, Wilson's (70); WOODCOCK, American (1); GULL, Laughing (823); GULL, Bonaparte's (15); GULL, Ring-billed (1832); GULL, Herring (85); TERN, Caspian (24); TERN, Royal (49); TERN, Common (8); TERN, Forster's (164); SKIMMER, Black (300); PIGEON, Rock (102); COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian (23); DOVE, White-winged (2); DOVE, Mourning (73); DOVE, Inca (4); OWL, Barn (3); OWL, Great Horned (4); OWL, Burrowing (1); OWL, Barred (1); KINGFISHER, Belted (45); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (4); SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied (12); WOODPECKER, Downy (29); FLICKER, Northern (14); PHOEBE, Eastern (59); FLYCATCHER, Vermilion (2); KINGBIRD, Western (1); SHRIKE, Loggerhead (25); VIREO, Blue-headed (15); JAY, Blue (38); SWALLOW, Tree (534); CHICKADEE, Carolina (25); NUTHATCH, White-breasted (1); CREEPER, Brown (3); WREN, Carolina (1); WREN, House (20); WREN, Sedge (27); WREN, Marsh (6); KINGLET, Golden-crowned (36); KINGLET, Ruby-crowned (122); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (68); BLUEBIRD, Eastern (10); THRUSH, Hermit (25); ROBIN, American (1329); CATBIRD, Gray (22); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (37); THRASHER, Brown (29); STARLING, European (186); PIPIT, American (47); WAXWING, Cedar (114); WARBLER, Orange-crowned (47); WARBLER, Yellow-rumped (137); WARBLER, Yellow-r. (Myrtle) (229); WARBLER, Pine (27); WARBLER, Prairie (1); WARBLER, Palm (1); WARBLER, Black-and-white (1); WATERTHRUSH, Northern (1); YELLOWTHROAT, Common (25); TOWHEE, Eastern (1); SPARROW, Chipping (3); SPARROW, Field (1); SPARROW, Savannah (87); SPARROW, LeConte's (7); SPARROW, Nelson's Sharp-tailed (1); SPARROW, Seaside (8); SPARROW, Song (14); SPARROW, Lincoln's (7); SPARROW, Swamp (151); SPARROW, White-throated (159); SPARROW, White-crowned (6); JUNCO, Dark-eyed (7); SPARROW, species (6); CARDINAL, Northern (40); GROSBEAK, Rose-breasted (1); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (1483); MEADOWLARK, Eastern (36); GRACKLE, Common (122); GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (436); GRACKLE, Great-tailed (264); COWBIRD, Brown-headed (1); GOLDFINCH, American (116); SPARROW, House (15); SPECIES, total (169); INDIVIDUALS, total (35931).

Participants; Andrea Ayers; Howard Davis; Nancy and Don Fisher; Bill Graber; John Haynes; Chad Henderson; Levie Horton; Lance Howell; Don Jeane; Harrison Jordan; Gary Kelley; Carol Lynn and Andy Loker; Steve Mayes; Royce Pendergast; Jeff Pittman; Daniel Reed; Sherrie Roden; Ken Sztraky; Bill Tarbox; Patrick Walther; Tex Wells; Colt Westbrook; Jana and John Whittle. *John A. Whittle*

## Bird Sightings – November 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. 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." The range of dates for which the species was reported is shown in parentheses in a column before the sighting details or report summaries.

**Commentary:** Pride of place this month goes to the Red Phalarope found on the West Jefferson County Field Trip as described in last month's *Brown Pelican*. Next was the Golden Eagle first seen a week earlier in *exactly* the same place on McDermand Road in west Jefferson County. Of note also are the multiple sightings of multiple species of hummingbird, mostly at Rose Ann and Harrison Jordan's

feeders in north Beaumont. (If you review the listings carefully, you will find two reports from Nederland also.) The key to attracting wintering hummingbirds appears to be consistently providing flowers (to the extent possible) and feeders year after year throughout the winter. A Sage Thrasher was seen early in the month by an experienced observer in the vicinity of the Willows at Sea Rim State Park., but as far as we know it was not seen again. "Overshooting" migrant Brown Creepers are becoming quite usual in November each year, but a total of six in three coastal locations on November 12 was remarkable. Lingering Neotropical migrants have not been particularly numerous this year, and a prolonged cold snap in early December has probably caused those that were hiding in the area to move south. Relatively sparse reports of waterfowl may reflect on at least some of our observers being drawn to west Jefferson County instead of Cattail Marsh. With the almost certainty of finding Sandhill Cranes, and a good selection of raptors (even when the eagles are not around), and probably the best sparrow habitats in the county, there is certainly much to recommend that area. December sightings there have included a Harris's sparrow. Shorebirding has been hampered by the continued closed status of Sea Rim State Park, and unfavorable water levels in both Cattail Marsh and on Pleasure Island.

GOOSE, White-fronted	(4-21)	JEF 6 reps(769)	ACCIPITER species	(4-4)	JEF 11/4(1) GD
GOOSE, Snow	(4-19)	JEF 6 reps(5508)	HAWK, Red-shouldered	(4-18)	JEF 6 reps(6)
GOOSE, Ross's	(5-18)	JEF-TP 11/5(1) JAW; JEF	HAWK, Red-tailed	(4-19)	JEF 9 reps(47)
11/18(10) FTWJ			EAGLE, Golden	(11-17)	JEF 11/11(1) JAW; JEF
GOOSE, Canada	(11-11)	JEF-TP 11/11(14) JAW	11/12(1) RHJ; JEF 11/17(1) JHH		
DUCK, Wood	(12-12)	JEF-SW 11/12(1) MHW	CARACARA, Crested	(4-21)	JEF 11/4(2) GD; JEF 11/21(3)
GADWALL	(5-11)	JEF 2 reps(445)	JK		
WIGEON, American	(11-11)	JEF 1 rep(3)	KESTREL, American	(4-19)	JEF 8 reps(54)
MALLARD	(5-11)	JEF 2 reps(2)	MERLIN	(4-18)	JEF 11/4(1) GD; JEF-TX87
DUCK, Mottled	(5-12)	JEF-TP 11/5(4) JAW; JEF-	11/12(1) HM; JEF 11/18(1) FTWJ		
TX87 11/12(2) MHW			FALCON, Peregrine	(5-19)	JEF-TXPT 11/5(1) SM; JEF
TEAL, Blue-winged	(5-19)	JEF 3 reps(202)	11/12(1) MHW; JEF 11/17(1) SM; JEF 11/18(1) FTWJ; JEF		
SHOVELER, Northern	(5-19)	JEF 4 reps(1060)	11/19(1) KS		
PINTAIL, Northern	(5-11)	JEF 2 reps(30)	RAIL, Clapper	(4-12)	JEF 2 reps(6)
TEAL, Green-winged	(5-11)	JEF 2 reps(140)	RAIL, Virginia	(4-4)	JEF-TXPT 11/4(1) JAW
DUCK, Ring-necked	(5-5)	JEF 1 rep(275)	MOORHEN, Common	(4-12)	JEF 3 reps(16)
SCAUP, Greater	(5-11)	JEF-TP 11/5(1) JAW; JEF-TP	COOT, American	(5-11)	JEF 2 reps(1545)
11/11(4) JAW			CRANE, Sandhill	(4-18)	JEF 11/4(650) GD; JEF
SCAUP, Lesser	(5-11)	JEF 2 reps(271)	11/5(650) JAW; JEF 11/12(50) RHJ; JEF 11/18(700) FTWJ		
MERGANSE, Hooded	(5-5)	JEF-TXPT 11/5(2) SM	PLOVER, Black-bellied	(4-19)	JEF 4 reps(26)
DUCK, Ruddy	(5-5)	JEF 1 rep(151)	PLOVER, Semipalmated	(4-12)	JEF 2 reps(8)
GREBE, Pied-billed	(4-12)	JEF 4 reps(12)	KILLDEER	(5-19)	JEF 5 reps(30)
GREBE, Eared	(5-5)	JEF 1 rep(1)	OYSTERCATCHER, Amer.	(5-5)	JEF-TXPT 11/5(2) SM
PELICAN, Amer. White	(12-12)	JEF 1 rep(60)	STILT, Black-necked	(4-19)	JEF 5 reps(154)
PELICAN, Brown	(4-12)	JEF-TX87 11/4(2) JAW; JEF-	AVOCET, American	(4-12)	JEF 2 reps(22)
TX87 11/12(3) MHW; JEF-TXPT 11/12(3) MHW			YELLOWLEGS, Greater	(4-19)	JEF 7 reps(92)
CORMORANT, Neotropical	(4-12)	JEF 3 reps(64)	WILLET	(4-12)	JEF 2 reps(17)
CORMORANT, Double-cr.	(4-4)	JEF 1 rep(2)	YELLOWLEGS, Lesser	(4-19)	JEF 3 reps(59)
HERON, Great Blue	(4-19)	JEF 5 reps(16)	CURLEW, Long-billed	(18-19)	JEF 2 reps(56)
EGRET, Great	(4-19)	JEF 7 reps(52)	KNOT, Red	(12-12)	JEF-SRSP 11/12(1) MHW
EGRET, Snowy	(4-18)	JEF 6 reps(76)	SANDERLING	(4-12)	JEF 2 reps(40)
HERON, Little Blue	(5-5)	JEF 1 rep(1)	SANDPIPER, Western	(4-18)	JEF 4 reps(39)
HERON, Tricolored	(4-12)	JEF 3 reps(6)	SANDPIPER, Peep	(4-19)	JEF 5 reps(180)
EGRET, Cattle	(5-12)	JEF 2 reps(44)	SANDPIPER, Pectoral	(4-4)	JEF-MCFW 11/4(1) JAW
NIGHT-HERON, Black-cr.	(5-5)	JEF 1 rep(27)	DUNLIN	(4-18)	JEF 4 reps(1021)
IBIS, White	(4-19)	JEF 6 reps(262)	SANDPIPER, Stilt	(12-12)	JEF-TXPT 11/12(1) MHW
IBIS, White-faced	(5-11)	JEF-TP 11/5(3) JAW; JEF-TP	DOWITCHER, Short-billed	(12-19)	JEF 11/12(1000) RHJ; JEF
11/11(1) JAW			11/19(4) KS		
IBIS, White-faced	(5-11)	JEF 2 reps(4)	DOWITCHER, Long-billed	(11-19)	JEF 3 reps(2228)
IBIS, <i>Plegadis</i>	(5-19)	JEF 4 reps(638)	DOWITCHER species	(4-17)	JEF 2 reps(12)
SPOONBILL, Roseate	(4-5)	JEF-TXPT 11/4(1) JAW; JEF-	WOODCOCK, American	(3-4)	JEF-SRSP 11/3(1) DV; JEF-
TP 11/5(5) JAW			SRSP 11/4(1) JAW		
VULTURE, Black	(4-12)	JEF 2 reps(7)	PHALAROPE, Red	(17-21)	JEF 11/17(1) SM; JEF
VULTURE, Turkey	(4-19)	JEF 6 reps(35)	11/18(1) FTWJ; JEF 11/19(1) KS; JEF 11/21(1) JK		
KITE, White-tailed	(4-12)	JEF 2 reps(7)	GULL, Laughing	(4-12)	JEF 3 reps(448)
EAGLE, Bald	(17-17)	JEF 11/17(1) SM	GULL, Franklin's	(12-12)	JEF 11/12(1) MHW
HARRIER, Northern	(4-19)	JEF 8 reps(59)	GULL, Ring-billed	(4-18)	JEF 4 reps(146)
HAWK, Sharp-shinned	(5-18)	JEF 2 reps(2)	TERN, Caspian	(4-12)	JEF 3 reps(27)
HAWK, Cooper's	(9-18)	JEF-SILS 11/9(1) KS; JEF-	TERN, Forster's	(4-12)	JEF 2 reps(33)
TXPT 11/12(1) MHW; JEF 11/18(1) FTWJ					

TERN, Royal (4-12) JEF 2 reps(76)  
PIGEON, Rock (4-19) JEF 6 reps(206)  
COLLARED-DOVE, Euras. (5-5) JEF 1 rep(29)  
DOVE, White-winged (4-12) JEF 4 reps(45)  
DOVE, Mourning (4-19) JEF 6 reps(231)  
OWL, Barn (12-12) JEF-SW 11/12(1) MHW  
OWL, Great Horned (4-12) JEF-SW 11/4(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 11/11(2) JAW; JEF-SW 11/12(1) MHW  
NIGHTHAWK, Common (7-7) JEF-BMT 11/7(1) RHJ  
WILL'S-WIDOW, Chuck- (4-4) JEF-SW 11/4(1) JAW  
HUMMINGBIRD, Black-ch. (6-19) JEF-BMT 11/6(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/11(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/18(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/19(1) RHJ  
HUMMINGBIRD, Broad-tail (11-19) JEF-BMT 11/11(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/14(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/17(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/19(1) RHJ  
HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous (3-30) JEF-BMT 11/3(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/5(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/6(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/7(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/9(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/10(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/11(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/12(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/14(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/19(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/21(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/23(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/24(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/25(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/26(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/30(2) JAW  
HUMMINGBIRD species (8-26) JEF-BMT 11/8(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/10(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/11(1) RHJ; JEF-NEDR 11/11(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 11/12(1) JAW; JEF 11/13(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/17(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/21(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/22(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/23(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/25(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 11/26(1) RHJ  
KINGFISHER, Belted (4-19) JEF 7 reps(32)  
WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (5-19) JEF 4 reps(11)  
SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bell. (1-19) HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 4 reps(6)  
WOODPECKER, Downy (4-19) JEF 4 reps(8)  
FLICKER, Northern (5-18) JEF 3 reps(4)  
WOODPECKER, Pileated (12-19) JEF 2 reps(3)  
WOOD-PEWEE, Eastern (4-4) JEF-SRSP 11/4(2) JAW; JEF-SW 11/4(1) JAW  
PHOEBE, Eastern (1-22) HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 7 reps(47)  
FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tail. (11-11) JEF 11/11(1) JAW  
SHRIKE, Loggerhead (4-19) JEF 6 reps(46)  
VIREO, White-eyed (22-22) HAI-SILS 11/22(1) KS  
VIREO, Blue-headed (4-25) JEF 5 reps(6)  
JAY, Blue (4-19) JEF 4 reps(12)  
CROW, American (11-19) JEF 2 reps(8)  
SWALLOW, Tree (3-19) JEF 7 reps(830)  
CHICKADEE, Carolina (4-19) JEF 5 reps(9)  
TITMOUSE, Tufted (19-19) JEF 1 rep(3)  
CREEPER, Brown (3-12) JEF-SW 11/3(2) DV; JEF-SRSP 11/4(1) JAW; JEF-SW 11/4(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 11/5(2) SM; JEF-SW 11/5(3) SM; JEF-SRSP 11/12(3) MHW; JEF-SW 11/12(2) MHW; JEF-TXPT 11/12(1) MHW  
WREN, Carolina (19-19) JEF 1 rep(3)  
WREN, House (8-18) JEF-NEDR 11/8(1) JAW; JEF 11/18(4) FTWJ  
WREN, Winter (3-21) JEF-SW 11/3(1) DV; JEF-SRSP 11/21(1) JK  
WREN, Sedge (4-18) JEF-TXPT 11/4(1) JAW; JEF-MCFW 11/12(1) MHW; JEF 11/18(3) FTWJ  
KINGLET, Golden-crowned (3-19) HAI 1 rep(3); JEF 7 reps(157)  
KINGLET, Ruby-crowned (4-25) JEF 17 reps(79)  
GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (5-12) JEF 3 reps(12)  
BLUEBIRD, Eastern (5-22) HAI 2 reps(9); JEF 1 rep(3)  
THRUSH, Hermit (4-19) JEF 3 reps(18)  
ROBIN, American (3-21) HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 7 reps(19)  
CATBIRD, Gray (4-18) JEF-SW 11/4(4) JAW; JEF 11/18(3) FTWJ  
MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (4-19) JEF 6 reps(30)  
THRASHER, Sage (3-3) JEF-SRSP 11/3(1) DV  
THRASHER, Brown (4-26) JEF 12 reps(24)  
STARLING, European (4-19) JEF 5 reps(968)  
PIPIT, American (4-19) JEF 5 reps(25)  
WARBLER, Orange-crown. (4-25) JEF 4 reps(7)  
WARBLER, Nashville (5-5) JEF-SRSP 11/5(1) SM  
WARBLER, Magnolia (3-3) JEF-SW 11/3(1) DV  
WARBLER, Yellow-rumped (2-22) HAI 1 rep(3); JEF 5 reps(18)  
WARBLER, Black-thr. Green(3-4) JEF-SW 11/3(4) DV; JEF-SW

11/4(1) JAW  
WARBLER, Pine (3-30) JEF 8 reps(14)  
WARBLER, Palm (4-21) JEF-TXPT 11/4(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 11/21(1) JK; JEF-SW 11/21(2) JK; JEF-TXPT 11/21(1) JK  
WARBLER, Black-and-wh. (4-4) JEF-SW 11/4(1) JAW  
YELLOWTHROAT, Common(12-12) JEF 1 rep(2)  
WARBLER, Hooded (3-3) JEF-SRSP 11/3(1) DV  
WARBLER, Wilson's (12-12) JEF-SW 11/12(1) SM  
TANAGER, Scarlet (3-3) JEF-SW 11/3(1) DV  
TOWHEE, Eastern (12-21) JEF-SW 11/12(1) MHW; JEF-TXPT 11/21(1) JK  
SPARROW, Chipping (3-18) JEF 4 reps(16)  
SPARROW, Field (3-12) JEF-SRSP 11/3(6) DV; JEF-SW 11/4(4) JAW; JEF 11/5(4) JAW; JEF-SRSP 11/12(4) MHW; JEF-TXPT 11/12(2) MHW  
SPARROW, Vesper (4-18) JEF-MCFW 11/4(1) JAW; JEF 11/18(1) FTWJ  
SPARROW, Savannah (4-19) JEF 7 reps(369)  
SPARROW, Grasshopper (12-12) JEF-TXPT 11/12(1) MHW  
SPARROW, Henslow's (11-11) HAI 11/11(1) AH  
SPARROW, LeConte's (18-18) JEF 11/18(10) FTWJ  
SPARROW, Nelson's S-tail. (12-12) JEF 1 rep(20)  
SPARROW, Seaside (12-12) JEF 1 rep(8)  
SPARROW, Fox (4-21) JEF-TXPT 11/4(1) JAW; JEF-TXPT 11/21(1) JK  
SPARROW, Song (4-12) JEF 4 reps(14)  
SPARROW, Lincoln's (4-12) JEF 2 reps(2)  
SPARROW, Swamp (3-18) JEF 4 reps(42)  
SPARROW, White-throated (3-30) JEF 22 reps(251)  
SPARROW, White-crowned (3-5) JEF 4 reps(8)  
JUNCO, Dark-eyed (3-12) JEF-SRSP 11/3(1) DV; JEF-SW 11/3(5) DV; JEF-SW 11/4(2) JAW; JEF-SW 11/5(1) SM; JEF-SRSP 11/12(1) MHW; JEF-TXPT 11/12(3) MHW  
CARDINAL, Northern (5-19) JEF 4 reps(14)  
GROSBEAK, Blue (3-4) JEF-SW 11/3(1) DV; JEF-SRSP 11/4(2) JAW  
GROSBEAK, Blue (3-4) JEF 2 reps(3)  
BUNTING, Indigo (12-12) JEF-SRSP 11/12(1) MHW  
BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (4-19) JEF 6 reps(779)  
MEADOWLARK, Eastern (4-18) JEF 3 reps(38)  
MEADOWLARK species (4-11) JEF 3 reps(18)  
BLACKBIRD, Brewer's (18-18) JEF 11/18(10) FTWJ  
GRACKLE, Common (11-18) JEF 2 reps(13)  
GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (4-12) JEF 2 reps(43)  
GRACKLE, Great-tailed (4-19) JEF 6 reps(478)  
GRACKLE, Gt./Boat tailed (12-12) JEF 1 rep(10)  
COWBIRD, Brown-headed (5-18) JEF 3 reps(2375)  
BLACKBIRD species (5-18) JEF 2 reps(6000)  
FINCH, House (5-30) JEF 7 reps(12)  
GOLDFINCH, American (18-30) JEF 6 reps(9)  
SPARROW, House (4-22) HAI 1 rep(12); JEF 4 reps(36)

Number of Species 168  
Number of Individuals 38781

County Abbreviations:  
HAI— Hardin; JEF— Jefferson

Location Codes:  
BMT— Beaumont; MCFW— McFaddin NWR; NEDR— Nederland;  
SILS— Silsbee; SRSP— Sea Rim State Park; SW— Sabine Woods;  
TP— Tyrrell Park incl. Cattail Marsh; TX87— Texas 87 Pt. Arthur-Sabine Pass-Sea Rim SP; TXPT— Road to Pilot Station at Texas Point.

Observer Abbreviations;  
AH — Charlie Amos and Ann Hoover; DV — Don Verser; FTWJ — Golden Triangle Audubon Field Trip to West Jefferson County; GD — Gerald Duhon; HM — John Haynes and Steve Mayes; JAW — John Whittle; JHH — John Haynes; JK — Joseph Kennedy; KS — Ken Sztraky; MHW — Steve Mayes, John Haynes, John Whittle; RHJ — Rose Ann and Harrison Jordan; SM — Steve Mayes.

Details for the Very Rare Species are on page 7

## Turkey Creek Christmas Bird Count

The Turkey Creek count was conducted on December 16, 2006 in fairly pleasant weather conditions. The count circle covers an area essentially from a little west of Highway 69 on the west to FM92 on the east, and stretching from roughly FM418 in the south to FM1943 in the north. Thus it is half in Hardin County and half in Tyler County (which makes it difficult to include all the results in our regular Bird Sightings feature!) The compiler of this count is Curtis Hoagland of the Big Thicket National Preserve.

This is a circle which is heavily dominated by wooded areas of the Big Thicket, and the most consistency from year to year is found in the species that winter in such areas. A comparison of this year's results with those of the ten years prior to Hurricane Rita does not suggest any disturbing population decreases nor any significant increases. In fact, the numbers of woodland birds are very much in line with the recent average. Numbers of ducks – obviously down this year – probably reflect localized short-term conditions rather than any long term trend. However, we would caution that data from a single count has very low statistical significance, and only time will tell the whole story. The preliminary total number of species seen was 70.

On this day, the number of raptor species was also on the low side, with a number of species that are occasionally seen not being found. Among the Corvids, American Crows were down, while Blue Jays were up. As has been the experience elsewhere, Brown Creepers are exceptionally numerous this year, while Brown-headed Nuthatches were not. Franklin's Gull (doubtless lingering migrant birds) and Tree Swallow were the two unusual species. Several large flocks of Tree Swallows frequent the marshy areas of Jefferson and Orange Counties in the winter, and have probably been increasing in number in the last few years, so the birds seen, and birds were seen by four of the five parties, probably represent some expansion in distribution. However, as insect eaters, it was perhaps a little unexpected to find them after the relatively prolonged cold spell in early December.

Below is a preliminary listing of the numbers, as they were called out at the tally at the end of the day. The official results, checked against the observers' written reports, will be available on the Audubon web-site in about a month. Because of the particular interest in the effects of the hurricane, we have included the average number of each species seen in the ten years from 1995 to 2004. Note that this does not include 2005, because 2005 was affected by a number of short term issues arising from Hurricane Rita in September of that year, not least of which were difficulties in accessing some areas normally covered. We have also included below species that were not seen this year – with an appropriate "0" recorded – if there is a record of the species in the ten prior counts that we averaged. Those not seen this year are shown in italics.

Greater White-fronted Goose (80; av. 7.5)); Snow Goose (210; av. 9.1); Wood Duck (14; av. 3.7); *Gadwall* (0; av. 0.5); Mallard (3; av. 2.3); *Northern Shoveler* (0; av. 0.1); *Ring-necked Duck* (0; av. 0.1); *Lesser Scaup* (0; av. 0.4); *Hooded Merganser* (0; av. 0.2); *Ruddy Duck* (0; av. 0.5); Pied-billed Grebe (2; av. 2.5); *Double-crested Cormorant* (0; av. 0.2); *Cormorant species* (0; av. 3.7); Anhinga (1; av. 0.1); Great Blue Heron (5; av. 3.3); Great Egret (8; av. 2.3); *Snowy Egret* (0; av. 0.1); *White Ibis* (0; av. 0.4); Black Vulture (81; av. 59.3); Turkey Vulture (157; av. 73.2); *Osprey* (0; av. 0.2); *White-tailed Kite* (0; av. 0.3); *Northern Harrier* (0; av. 0.3); *Sharp-shinned Hawk* (0; av. 0.7); Cooper's Hawk (1; av. 0.7); Red-shouldered Hawk (8; av. 9.1); Red-tailed Hawk (5; av. 4.1); American Kestrel (9; av. 6.1); Killdeer (47; av. 10.6); American Woodcock (2; av. 0.5); *Laughing Gull* (0; av. 0); Franklin's Gull (2; av. 0); Mourning Dove (30; av. 30.2); Inca Dove (8;

av. 0.9); *Common Ground-Dove* (0; av. 0.3); *Greater Roadrunner* (0; av. 0.2); *Great Horned Owl* (0; av. 0.1); *Barred Owl* (0; av. 1); Belted Kingfisher (1; av. 0.6); Red-headed Woodpecker (4; av. 3); Red-bellied Woodpecker (38; av. 30.2); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (13; av. 14.8); Downy Woodpecker (16; av. 12.4); Hairy Woodpecker (3; av. 1.6); Northern Flicker (16; av. 7.8); Pileated Woodpecker (9; av. 12.8); *Acadian Flycatcher* (0; av. 0.1); Eastern Phoebe (43; av. 23); Loggerhead Shrike (2; av. 1.2); White-eyed Vireo (3; av. 2.4); *Yellow-throated Vireo* (0; av. 0.1); Blue-headed Vireo (8; av. 3.9); Blue Jay (69; av. 42.2); American Crow (99; av. 153.7); *Fish Crow* (0; av. 0.2); Tree Swallow (72; av. 0); Carolina Chickadee (51; av. 72.1); Tufted Titmouse (27; av. 40.7); *Red-breasted Nuthatch* (0; av. 0.4); Brown-headed Nuthatch (3; av. 7.4); Brown Creeper (8; av. 0.7); Carolina Wren (42; av. 22.9); House Wren (9; av. 4.9); Winter Wren (1; av. 1.8); *Sedge wren* (0; av. 1.3); Golden-crowned Kinglet (39; av. 8.1); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (51; av. 64.7); *Blue-gray Gnatcatcher* (0; av. 0.5); Eastern Bluebird (120; av. 138); Hermit Thrush (19; av. 8.4); American Robin (968; av. 985.8); Gray Catbird (11; av. 4.5); Northern Mockingbird (22; av. 23.6); Brown Thrasher (3; av. 6.4); European Starling (12; av. 4.5); Cedar Waxwing (133; av. 94.3); Orange-crowned Warbler (13; av. 7.7); Yellow-rumped Warbler (279; av. 229.9); Pine Warbler (93; av. 66.6); Common Yellowthroat (1; av. 0.1); *Eastern Towhee* (0; av. 0.8); Chipping Sparrow (554; av. 202.5); Field Sparrow (3; av. 3.3); *Vesper Sparrow* (0; av. 0.4); Savannah Sparrow (8; av. 3.7); LeConte's Sparrow (1; av. 0.6); *Fox Sparrow* (0; av. 0.1); Song Sparrow (15; av. 8.7); Lincoln's Sparrow (3; av. 0.8); Swamp Sparrow (13; av. 5.3); White-throated Sparrow (57; av. 89.8); White-crowned Sparrow (2; av. 0.3); Dark-eyed Junco (33; av. 12.5); Northern Cardinal (94; av. 90.5); Red-winged Blackbird (16; av. 9.7); Eastern Meadowlark (12; av. 7.6); *Rusty Blackbird* (0; av. 0.7); *Common Grackle* (0; av. 121.4); *Brown-headed Cowbird* (0; av. 1.8); American Goldfinch (97; av. 111.8); House Sparrow (2; av. 2.6).

## Beech Creek Christmas Bird Count

The Beech Creek Christmas bird count was held on December 23, 2006. The weather was quite chilly in the early morning with frost on the ground, but warmed up nicely during the day. However, the count recorded the lowest total in recent memory, with an unofficial total of 76 species. The count circle is centered near the south end of Steinhagen Lake and thus is bisected north to south by the Lake and the Neches River, and is in Tyler County on the west and Jasper County on the east. This year, Steinhagen Lake, quite simply is not currently a lake! The lake remains drawn down to the point where the only water is in the river as it meanders through the otherwise almost dry lake bed.

This major disruption of the normal habitat left the count circle with almost no ducks or water birds. Otherwise, the woodland birds were near normal on average, and sparrows were significantly above normal in numbers if not in variety of species. Interestingly enough, a Bald Eagle was recorded, as has become very usual on this count. The compiler of this count is Curtis Hoagland of the Big Thicket National Preserve.

Below is a preliminary listing of the numbers, as they were called out at the tally at the end of the day. The official results, checked against the observers' written reports, will be available on the Audubon web-site in about a month. See the notes on the Turkey Creek listing above. The average represents the average number seen in the ten years from 1995 to 2004. Note that this does not include 2005. Those not seen this year are shown in italics.

Greater White-fronted Goose (20; av. 0); Snow Goose (4; av. 19.7); Wood Duck (50; av. 4); *Gadwall* (0; av. 24.5); *American Wigeon* (0; av. 126); Mallard (0; av. 14.9); Teal species (1); Northern Shoveler (22; av. 2.5); *Northern Pintail* (0; av. 8); *Green-winged Teal* (0; av. 1.9); *Canvasback* (0; av. 145.7); *Redhead* (0; av. 2.2); *Ring-necked Duck* (0; av. 38.8); *Lesser Scaup* (0; av. 4.2); Hooded Merganser (1; av. 0.9); *Ruddy Duck* (0; av. 7.4); *Northern Bobwhite* (0; av. 1.7); Pied-billed Grebe (1; av. 14.6); *American White Pelican* (0; av. 32.6); *Neotropical Cormorant* (0; av. 0.4); Double-crested Cormorant (3; av. 125.6); *Anhinga* (0; av. 0.9); Great Blue Heron (13; av. 11); Great



Egret (11; av. 36.6); *Snowy Egret* (0; av. 7.6); *Little Blue Heron* (0; av. 1.0); *Tricolored Heron* (0; av. 1.1); *Cattle Egret* (0; av. 0.1); *Green Heron* (0; av. 0.1); *Black-crowned Night-Heron* (0; av. 0.3); *White Ibis* (0; av. 8); *Black Vulture* (61; av. 58.1); *Turkey Vulture* (82; av. 81.8); *Osprey* (2; av. 0.6); *Bald Eagle* (1; av. 0.9); *Northern Harrier* (0; av. 0.5); *Sharp-shinned Hawk* (1; av. 0.8); *Cooper's Hawk* (0; av. 0.1); *Accipiter* species (2; av. 0.3); *Red-shouldered Hawk* (12; av. 13.5); *Red-tailed Hawk* (7; av. 5.4); *American Kestrel* (5; av. 4.8); *Merlin* (1; av. 0.3); *Common Moorhen* (0; av. 11.3); *American Coot* (2; av. 1137); *Killdeer* (33; av. 38.1); *Spotted Sandpiper* (0; av. 2.0); *Greater Yellowlegs* (0; av. 0.1); *Lesser Yellowlegs* (4; av. 0); *Wilson's Snipe* (0; av. 2); *American Woodcock* (2; av. 0.4); *Bonaparte's Gull* (0; av. 0.8); *Ring-billed Gull* (0; av. 2.9); *Gull Species* (3; av. 0.1); *Common Tern* (0; av. 0.1); *Forster's Tern* (0; av. 26.9); *Rock Pigeon* (0; av. 2.5); *Eurasian Collared-Dove* (6; av. 0); *Mourning Dove* (67; av. 62.3); *Inca Dove* (20; av. 5.9); *Greater Roadrunner* (0; av. 0.1); *Eastern Screech-Owl* (0; av. 0.5); *Great Horned Owl* (0; av. 0.2); *Barred Owl* (0; av. 0.9); *Hummingbird species* (2; av. 0); *Belted Kingfisher* (3; av. 6.3); *Red-headed Woodpecker* (11; av. 2.8); *Red-bellied Woodpecker* (50; av. 53); *Yellow-bellied Sapsucker* (41; av. 12.7); *Downy Woodpecker* (18; av. 27.1); *Hairy Woodpecker* (0; av. 1.1); *Northern Flicker* (17; av. 13.5); *Pileated Woodpecker* (17; av. 24); *Empidonax species* (0; av. 0.4); *Eastern Phoebe* (56; av. 35.2); *Loggerhead Shrike* (1; av. 2.3); *White-eyed Vireo* (0; av. 1.7); *Blue-headed Vireo* (2; av. 3); *Blue Jay* (45; av. 50); *American Crow* (87; av. 166.7); *Fish Crow* (0; av. 4.1); *Carolina Chickadee* (35; av. 88); *Tufted Titmouse* (24; av. 59.6); *Red-breasted Nuthatch* (0; av. 0.5); *White-breasted Nuthatch* (0; av. 0.1); *Brown-headed Nuthatch* (4; av. 2.8); *Brown Creeper* (4; av. 2); *Carolina Wren* (41; av. 44.3); *House Wren* (7; av. 4.5); *Winter Wren* (1; av. 2.6); *Sedge Wren* (0; av. 0.5); *Marsh Wren* (0; av. 0.3); *Golden-crowned Kinglet* (8; av. 15.2); *Ruby-crowned Kinglet* (66; av. 90.9); *Blue-gray Gnatcatcher* (0; av. 5.9); *Eastern Bluebird* (171; av. 136.7); *Hermit Thrush* (6; av. 6.3); *American Robin* (367; av. 1481.8); *Gray Catbird* (3; av. 4.1); *Northern Mockingbird* (26; av. 32); *Brown Thrasher* (9; av. 8); *European Starling* (12; av. 22.3); *Cedar Waxwing* (100; av. 245.7); *Orange-crowned Warbler* (4; av. 12.7); *Yellow-rumped Warbler* (159; av. 237.7); *Pine Warbler* (239; av. 116.3); *Black-and-white Warbler* (0; av. 0.1); *Common Yellowthroat* (0; av. 0.6); *Wilson's Warbler* (1; av. 0.1); *Eastern Towhee* (0; av. 2.3); *Bachman's Sparrow* (0; av. 0.6); *Chipping Sparrow* (762; av. 274.3); *Field Sparrow* (5; av. 1.0); *Lark Sparrow* (0; av. 0.1); *Savannah Sparrow* (30; av. 10.2); *Grasshopper Sparrow* (0; av. 0.1); *LeConte's Sparrow* (1; av. 0.9); *Fox Sparrow* (0; av. 0.5); *Song Sparrow* (88; av. 11.9); *Lincoln's Sparrow* (7; av. 0.8); *Swamp Sparrow* (57; av. 13.1); *White-throated Sparrow* (427; av. 172); *White-crowned Sparrow* (0; av. 2.3); *Dark-eyed Junco* (94; av. 22.3); *Northern Cardinal* (88; av. 141); *Red-winged Blackbird* (64; av. 171); *Eastern Meadowlark* (35; av. 25); *Brewer's Blackbird* (0; av. 4.8); *Common Grackle* (424; av. 802); *Brown-headed Cowbird* (0; av. 3.5); *Purple Finch* (0; av. 1.6); *Pine Siskin* (0; av. 0.2); *American Goldfinch* (461; av. 288); *House Sparrow* (3; av. 3.7).

## Johnson Bayou and Orange County Christmas Bird Counts

Full details of the Johnson Bayou count will be included in next month's *Brown Pelican* along with details from the Orange County Count. Ken Sztraky is compiler of both counts.

The Johnson Bayou Count was held on December 17, 2006 and recorded 121 species. Highlights included both Blue Grosbeak and Indigo Bunting from the North Chenier on the Gray Estate property, and a Crested Caracara on Deep Bayou Road.

This was an important count, because it covers an area that was very badly impacted by Hurricane Rita in September 2005. On the cheniers near the coast, there has been and probably will continue to be significant loss of trees. Those not blown over by the winds suffered extensive salt water damage. Some hackberry trees may survive, but many will not. The damage to oaks is likely very extensive.

The bird population changes are interesting. We were unable to conduct a count last year because of severe logistical difficulties, but we do know there were very few birds present. Compared to last year, there were good numbers of ducks, and some exceptionally high

sparrow numbers. On the immediate coastal chenier, there were very few insectivores, but reasonable numbers just inland.

The Orange County count was held in good weather on January 1, and tallied a preliminary total of 122 species. Species new to the count were Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Green Heron and Redhead.

Especially in the southern part of the circle, which years ago used to teem with ducks, there were very few waterfowl around. The Bessie Heights area also failed to produce many ducks. Such ordinarily common species as Mottled Duck, Northern Pintail and Northern Shoveler were apparently not found during this count.

Shorebirds were not quite as bad, but Black-necked Stilt, Roseate Spoonbill and Black-bellied Plover were all inexplicably absent from accessible areas in the count circle on count day. Fortunately, the woodland birds were there!

## Sightings – Details of Rare Species

(continued from page 5)

### Golden Eagle – John Whittle – 11 November 2006

Bird was seen at 1:00 p.m. west of McDermand Road, 1/3 mile north of FM365 in far west Jefferson County on a levee separating sections of a flooded bare soil field about 250 feet from the road. Bird was plucking a male Mallard and proceeded to eat some of the breast. The bird did jump up with extended wings a couple of times with the Mallard still in talons, but dropped back down and continued to eat. A young Northern Harrier landed on the levee, perhaps five feet from the eagle, but kept a respectful distance. At 1:20 p.m., the bird suddenly took off (without the Mallard), and flew in a wide semicircle, gaining height. It was watched for five minutes and eventually started circling and descending until it disappeared behind a substantial stand of trees about one to two miles west of the original location. The wing beats were slow, with much gliding and soaring with the wings held in a slight dihedral.

Bird was very large, appearing about three times the size of the Northern Harrier. In flight, the long plank like wings were very evident. The bird was essential dark brown all over, with feathered legs including the tarsi. The feet were yellow. The bird had a large hooked grayish beak. The rear top of the head and the nape area were a beautiful golden color. The upper surface of the tail had two or three narrow lighter bands. The greater coverts on the perched bird showed what appeared as splotchy "dirty white" patches; in flight this looked like a very patchy incomplete carpal bar, but not contrasting strongly with the rest of the wing. There was no other white on the upper or lower wings or in the ventral area.

As compared to a Bald Eagle, the bird had a slightly longer tail, a thinner and longer neck and thus slightly smaller head. The trailing edge of the wing did have a slight bulge at the secondaries, unlike the Bald Eagle's very straight trailing edge.

The bird was seen again in the same area by John Haynes on November 17.

### Red Phalarope – Steve Mayes – 18 November 2006

Bird was seen at about 1:00 p.m. west of McDermand Road, 1/3 mile north of FM365 in far west Jefferson County in a flooded bare soil field swimming close to a small levy about 50 feet from the road. After a period, all the numerous shorebirds exploded off the field as an adult Peregrine Falcon came cruising through, and the bird was not relocated until 30 minutes later when it was much further from the road.

The phalarope was very gray on the back with no streaking. The breast was very white but towards the belly it was stained with mud. It had the black ear patch with black on top of the head towards the nape and going down the back of the neck. The bill was shortish and thick, easily distinguished from the thinner bills of the other two North American phalaropes. The bill appeared all black.

The bird was seen again the following day, and reported also on November 22.



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## RARE BIRD ALERTS

Unfortunately, almost all the local and regional telephone Rare Bird Alerts have been discontinued in favor of various Internet based means of distribution.

The Texas-wide Rare Bird Alert, maintained by Houston Audubon Society, is available on their web-site at <http://www.houstonaudubon.org/> and each new alert is posted on the TEXBIRDS listserv. The archives of this listserv can be accessed at <http://listserv.uh.edu/archives/texbirds.html> It is not necessary to subscribe to the listserv to view the archives.

Transcriptions of many current and recent email alerts are available on the 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 very early issues.

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