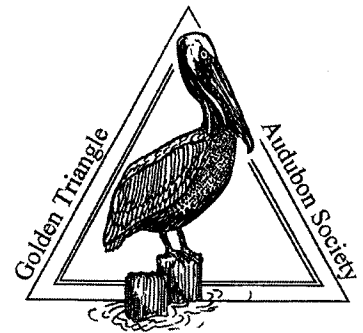


Brown Pelican

Scanned from Originals

The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 13 No. 4

April 2007

Membership Meeting
Thursday, April 19, 2007, 6:00 PM
Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont
Purple Martins
Jace Stansbury

Jace will talk about the history of his Purple Martin colony, and then present a slide show produced by the Purple Martin Conservation Association.

Jace is a member of the Purple Martin Conservation Association and a Purple Martin landlord for 13 years. He maintains the online index to the PMCA's quarterly magazine *Purple Martin Update*, and has a blog that consists of photographs and observations that are nature related. The URL for the blog is <http://naturejournals.blogspot.com/>

We will plan on having the refreshments ready by 6:00 p.m. and the program will start at 7:00 p.m. sharp.

Our Meeting Place

As our regular attendees will know, the main building at the Garden Center in Tyrrell Park is undergoing a complete renovation and expansion, making it unavailable for our use for several months. The new maintenance building (which seems to be becoming affectionately known as "The Green Barn") replacing the old structure which was severely damaged in Hurricane Rita, is complete. Several of our officers have inspected this building, and have advised that they believe it is adequate in all essential respects for our meetings. Although this building has been designed as a maintenance facility, the need to use it for meetings while the main building is being renovated was a factor in many aspects of the completion of the building. However, there will not be a separate place to eat, and the space available is obviously less than we have become accustomed to.

We have therefore made the decision to hold the April Meeting in this facility, and, as long as it proves adequate, we will continue to use it during the renovation of the main building. We have decided to continue with a 6:00 p.m. doors open schedule, so that we can start promptly at 7:00 p.m. and be out of the park on time before 9:00 p.m. We may have more unstacking and stacking of chairs to do and a 6:00 p.m. start will give us a little more cushion in the timing.

The Port Arthur Library was a very attractive facility and has everything we need. However, it appeared that the driving distance was a deterrent to many. We thank Sherrie Roden for making the arrangements with the Library for the March meeting.

The Brown Pelican

Vol. 13, No.4 April 2007

Golden Triangle Audubon Society

See Web Site for more
information
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

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Calendar of Events

April 7, 15 and 21. Yellow Rail walks at Anahuac NWR.

Hosted annually by the Friends of Anahuac Refuge, the rail walks give birders and birdwatchers the opportunity to see up to five species of rails.

Sat. April 7 7:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Sun. April 15 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Sat. April 21 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

The goal is to provide an opportunity to see some of the most elusive birds in Texas, the Yellow and Black Rail. We also regularly find Sora, Virginia Rail, and Clapper Rail on the walks. Sedge Wrens and Seaside Sparrows are also often seen.

Learn about rail ecology and management while searching for Yellow Rails through salty prairie habitat. Walking through marsh habitat can be challenging. Participants should wear waterproof boots (rubber boots are best). And don't forget the binoculars, insect repellent, and drinking water. Walks last from 1.5 to 2 hours

All tours begin at the Visitor Information Station. For more information, please contact the Refuge office at 409-267-3337

Thursday April 19. Membership Meeting. Speaker Jace Stansbury on Purple Martins. see page 1

Saturday April 21. Field Trip Sabine Pass area. This field trip will look for migrant species in Sabine Woods and elsewhere. Minimal walking required.

Unfortunately, Sea Rim State Park is still closed. We will therefore assemble at Sabine Woods at 7:30 a.m. However, we will, unless reports from other spots on the coast dictate otherwise, also visit the Willows at Sea Rim – the only part of the park that is currently accessible. We may also visit the road to the Pilot Station at Texas Point, McFaddin Refuge and/or McFaddin Beach. At Sabine Woods, there is a small parking area, but additional parking is available is improvised by using the roadside verges beyond the limits of the parking area. Please pull off the highway as is reasonably possible.

Easy walking on the boardwalk at Sabine Woods and the Willows to look for migrant songbirds. There is a \$5

sanctuary pass fee at Sabine Woods for those who are not members of Texas Ornithological Society. This field trip is especially suited for not-very-experienced birders, and those who are unable to walk over rougher ground.

Birding in late April can be exciting. However, we cannot promise anything, as the number of birds in the coastal woodlots is strongly dependent on the weather conditions over the Gulf.

April 27 – 30. Balcones Songbird Festival. Balcones Canyonlands NWR, 24518 FM 1431 Marble Falls, TX 78654 (mailing Address: P.O.Box 4678 Lago Vista, TX 78645); See www.balconessongbirdfestival.org for more details. Refuge Telephone (512) 965-2473; fax: (512) 267-6530.

Saturday May 12. 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 17. Membership Meeting. Full details in next issue.

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 estb@earthshare-texas.org.

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank Jana Whittle for bringing refreshments in February. **We need volunteers to bring all items for April and all later 2007 meetings.** Please do not wait until the last minute to volunteer! 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!

Sabine Woods Work Day, March 3, 2007

Texas Ornithological Society and Golden Triangle Audubon Society everyone who helped with the very productive Sabine Woods Work Day on Saturday March 3.

We accomplished everything that we needed in the way of maintenance (although we probably will want to mow the main trail towards the middle of this month). In addition, we added three new benches and one new bench/picnic table. Two of the benches are in memory of Grady Skillern in recognition of everything he did for Sabine Woods over the years, and two in memory of Bessie Cornelius in recognition of all her contributions to bird habitat conservation over her lifetime. Suitable plaques have been attached to them. The bench at the drip was modified to allow people to sit on it facing the drip, and to increase the number of people who can sit and watch the drip. A board was replaced on one of the other existing benches.

One other major item accomplished was the removal of a limb of the large mulberry tree that had continued to droop more and more and was blocking the boardwalk. The remaining limb now forms an arch over the boardwalk, and it remains to be seen whether it will now droop further and require removal. We hope not, but that mulberry tree, which has attracted so many fruit-eating birds over the years,

was severely impacted by hurricane Rita. We planted four new mulberry trees in the vicinity last year, and we put two cuttings into the ground this time.

Other maintenance work accomplished included cutting back vegetation from the trails, some clearing of grape vines etc from some of the oaks in the western part of the sanctuary, and continuation of the privet and McCartney rose eradication programs. We believe we have nearly completed the privet program, although some small plants were doubtless missed and new ones will continue to sprout for a year or two. The McCartney rose problem will take a lot longer to complete. We have concentrated on clearing the open areas in, around and on the edges of the main woods and will expand as time and resources permit. It was too early in the year for any tallow to have leafed out – and we know we have a few. These will be dealt with around the end of this month.

Those who helped were: Andy Allen, Richard Carey, Bob Collier, Frank Giglio, John Haynes, Pat and Don Jeane, Steve Mayes, Sherrie Roden, Christine Sliva, and Jana Whittle. Thanks again to each and everyone.

John Whittle

Bird Alert

We usually remark that the time delay in printing and mailing the *Brown Pelican* makes it scarcely worthwhile to attempt a "Bird Alert" in March or April. However, we will attempt one. This year, in strong contrast to last, the early part of the migration season has produced quite good birding. During the middle two weeks of March, we have seen good numbers of early migrants such as Northern Parulas, Prothonotary Warblers, and Louisiana Waterthrushes. There was a period of little activity in the coastal woodlots during the last week in March. However, the frontal system that came through in very wet fashion on March 31st, confounding the weather prognosticators in its behavior did bring down a good number of migrants. The weekend of March 31st/April 1st saw at least 18 species of warblers (including Blackburnian), and many other migrants, including Summer Tanager, Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Indigo Bunting.

Sponsor our Birdathon!

As most of you will know, the Chapters in Texas and Louisiana nominated me for the National Audubon Society (NAS) Board of Directors, and I was elected to the board in 2004 and then reelected in 2007 as an at-large member.

One of the most successful means of fundraising for Audubon, and the one I am most able to participate in, is a birdathon. Royce Pendergast has again graciously agreed to join with me in a Spring Birdathon.

A Birdathon is very similar to other "athons" you may be familiar with, such as telethons, walkathons, etc. The idea is for us to get up at the crack of dawn on a day in late April – we're planning April 16, with April 17 and May 1 as alternate days if the weather does not look as if it will cooperate -- and make a run to include the coast of east Jefferson County, Cattail Marsh, the woods of East Texas, perhaps Anahuac NWR, High Island and Bolivar Flats looking for as many species of birds as can be found. We're aiming for at least 150 species.

We're hoping you will sponsor us at \$1.00, \$.75, \$.50, or (or whatever amount you choose) per bird species. A flat donation is also welcome. Please take the time to make a pledge today -- your donation to our Birdathon will be earmarked to support Audubon's mission of protecting our natural heritage in Texas and the nation by supporting conservation, education and advocacy. Again this year, half of the funds we raise will be designated for Audubon Texas activities and programs, and the other half for NAS. Checks should be made out to Audubon Texas and all contributions are, of course, tax deductible. Local business people and businesses are often very receptive to this kind of fund raising and we would welcome any suggestions of where we might find receptive potential supporters. We appreciate all of you who contributed generously last year, and hope you will consider Please contact me at 3015 Nashville Ave, Nederland, TX 77627 or at john.whittle@lamar.edu or 409-880-8276 (W) or 409-722-4193 (H) with your pledge and your suggestions.

John A. Whittle

Bird Sightings – February 2007

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: February is always a slow month. Winter birds become harder to find, although it is difficult to believe that very many of them have already gone north. Waterfowl certainly do spread out in a "post hunting season" dispersal. Always the first migrant to appear, Purple Martins were reported during the month. Other notable sightings include a Solitary Sandpiper – which might have been an early migrant, but could have been one of the very small number that winter – and a Baltimore Oriole. The oriole was almost certainly wintering, and Tyrrell Park has become the place to find wintering orioles. The two Bald Eagles that are nesting along FM105 in Orange County attracted much attention, and subsequent to the end of the period covered by this report have proven to be raising two eaglets. Usually only one eaglet survives in a Bald Eagle nest, and it is a tribute to the availability of suitable prey, which apparently includes both fish and small mammals, that two survive so far.

GOOSE, Snow	(3-4)	JEF 2 reps(32)		
GADWALL	(4-18)	JEF 3 reps(106)		
WIGEON, American	(4-18)	JEF 3 reps(13)		
MALLARD	(4-25)	JEF 3 reps(15)		
DUCK, Mottled	(3-25)	JEF-PI 2/3(2) JAW; JEF-PI 2/25(2) JAW		
TEAL, Blue-winged	(3-25)	JEF 5 reps(89)		
SHOVELER, Northern	(3-25)	JEF 5 reps(3109)		
PINTAIL, Northern	(4-18)	JEF 3 reps(69)		
TEAL, Green-winged	(3-25)	JEF 5 reps(653)		
CANVASBACK	(25-25)	JEF-PI 2/25(10) JAW		
DUCK, Ring-necked	(4-18)	JEF 3 reps(118)		
SCAUP, Greater	(4-4)	JEF-TP 2/4(1) JAW		
SCAUP, Lesser	(3-25)	JEF 5 reps(406)		
BUFFLEHEAD	(4-18)	JEF 3 reps(8)		
DUCK, Ruddy	(3-25)	JEF 5 reps(2399)		
LOON, Common	(25-25)	JEF 1 rep(3)		
GREBE, Pied-billed	(3-25)	JEF 6 reps(54)		
GREBE, Horned	(11-11)	JEF-TP 2/11(1) JAW		
GREBE, Eared	(4-4)	JEF 1 rep(1)		
PELICAN, Amer. White	(3-25)	JEF 5 reps(235)		
PELICAN, Brown	(25-25)	JEF-PI 2/25(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 2/25(7) JAW		
CORMORANT, Neotropic	(3-25)	JEF 2/3(60) JAW; JEF-MCFW 2/3(2) JAW; JEF 2/4(3) JAW; JEF-TP 2/4(3) JAW; JEF-TP 2/11(8) JAW; JEF-TP 2/18(16) JAW; JEF 2/25(75) JAW; JEF-PI 2/25(21) JAW; JEF-TX87 2/25(1) JAW		
CORMORANT, Double-crested	(3-25)	JEF 5 reps(140)		
ANHINGA	(11-11)	JEF-TP 2/11(1) JAW		
HERON, Great Blue	(3-25)	JEF 6 reps(15)		
EGRET, Great	(3-25)	JEF 12 reps(312)		
EGRET, Snowy	(2-25)	JEF 8 reps(163)		
HERON, Little Blue	(11-25)	JEF 2 reps(2)		
HERON, Tricolored	(3-18)	JEF 4 reps(9)		
HERON, Green	(4-4)	JEF-TP 2/4(1) JAW		
NIGHT-HERON, Black-crown.	(4-4)	JEF 1 rep(6)		
IBIS, White	(3-25)	JEF-PI 2/3(3) JAW; JEF-TX87 2/3(20) JAW; JEF-TP 2/4(42) JAW; JEF-TP 2/11(48) JAW; JEF-TP 2/18(4) JAW; JEF-PI 2/25(20) JAW		
IBIS, White-faced	(4-18)	JEF-TP 2/4(1) JAW; JEF-TP 2/11(5) JAW; JEF-TP 2/18(2) JAW		
IBIS, Plegadis	(2-18)	JEF 2/2(100) JAW; JEF-TP 2/4(80) JAW; JEF-TP 2/11(59) JAW; JEF-TP 2/18(2) JAW		
SPOONBILL, Roseate	(3-25)	JEF 2/3(3) JAW; JEF 2/4(1) JAW; JEF-PI 2/25(40) JAW		
VULTURE, Black	(3-18)	JEF 4 reps(12)		
VULTURE, Turkey	(3-25)	JEF 5 reps(68)		
OSPREY	(10-10)	JEF 2/10(1) JAW		
KITE, White-tailed	(3-3)	JEF 1 rep(5)		
EAGLE, Bald	(4-11)	ORA 2/4(2) JFW; ORA 2/11(2) RHJ		
HARRIER, Northern	(3-25)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 4 reps(15)		
HAWK, Sharp-shinned	(18-18)	JEF 2/18(1) JAW; JEF-TP 2/18(1) JAW		
HAWK, Cooper's	(3-3)	JEF 2/3(1) JAW		
HAWK, Red-shouldered	(3-22)	JEF 10 reps(16)		
HAWK, Red-tailed	(1-25)	JEF 12 reps(78)		
KESTREL, American	(3-25)	JEF 6 reps(47)		
SORA (18-18)		JEF-TP 2/18(1) JAW		
MOORHEN, Common	(3-25)	JEF 5 reps(45)		
COOT, American	(3-25)	JEF 5 reps(7704)		
CRANE, Sandhill	(18-27)	JEF 2/18(26) JAW; JEF 2/18(32) SM; JEF 2/27(3) JP		
PLOVER, Black-bellied	(4-25)	JEF 2 reps(31)		
KILLDEER	(3-25)	JEF 8 reps(33)		
STILT, Black-necked	(3-3)	JEF 1 rep(2)		
AVOCET, American	(25-25)	JEF 1 rep(500)		
SANDPIPER, Spotted	(3-25)	JEF 2 reps(4)		
SANDPIPER, Solitary	(11-11)	JEF-TP 2/11(1) JAW		
YELLOWLEGS, Greater	(3-3)	JEF 1 rep(1)		
SANDPIPER, Western	(4-4)	JEF 1 rep(100)		
SANDPIPER, Peep	(25-25)	JEF 1 rep(20)		
DUNLIN	(4-4)	JEF 1 rep(500)		
DOWITCHER species	(3-25)	JEF 2 reps(600)		
GULL, Laughing	(3-25)	JEF 4 reps(189)		
GULL, Bonaparte's	(4-12)	JEF 3 reps(12)		
GULL, Ring-billed	(3-25)	JEF 3 reps(45)		
GULL, Herring	(25-25)	JEF 1 rep(3)		
TERN, Gull-billed	(4-4)	JEF 2/4(6) JAW		
TERN, Caspian	(11-25)	JEF 2 reps(5)		
TERN, Forster's	(11-25)	JEF 4 reps(30)		
TERN, Royal	(3-3)	JEF 1 rep(10)		
PIGEON, Rock	(4-18)	JEF 5 reps(12)		
COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian	(4-25)	JEF 5 reps(15)		
DOVE, White-winged	(1-25)	HAI 2 reps(4); JEF 9 reps(28)		
DOVE, Mourning	(3-25)	JEF 10 reps(42)		
DOVE, Inca	(3-25)	HAI 2 reps(4); JEF 3 reps(5)		
OWL, Barn	(12-12)	JEF-SW 2/12(1) CD		
SCREECH-OWL, Eastern	(4-22)	JEF 2/4(1) JL; JEF 2/5(1) JL; JEF 2/6(1) JL; JEF 2/7(1) JL; JEF 2/8(1) JL; JEF 2/9(1) JL; JEF-NEDR 2/22(1) JFW		
OWL, Great Horned	(3-3)	JEF-SW 2/3(1) JAW		
OWL, Barred	(10-10)	JEF-TP 2/10(2) RHJ		
HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous	(3-28)	JEF-BMT 2/3(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/4(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/5(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/6(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/7(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/9(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/10(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/11(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/12(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/13(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/14(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/15(3) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/16(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/17(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/21(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/22(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/23(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/24(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/25(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/26(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/27(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/28(1) RHJ		
KINGFISHER, Belted	(1-25)	JEF 6 reps(24)		
WOODPECKER, Red-bellied	(2-18)	JEF 5 reps(9)		
WOODPECKER, Downy	(3-23)	JEF 5 reps(9)		
FLICKER, Northern	(11-28)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 1 rep(1)		
WOODPECKER, Pileated	(4-13)	JEF 5 reps(6)		
PHOEBE, Eastern	(1-25)	JEF 8 reps(56)		
SHRIKE, Loggerhead	(3-25)	JEF 6 reps(54)		

JAY, Blue	(3-25)	JEF 5 reps(9)
CROW, American	(2-2)	HAI 1 rep(6)
CROW, Fish	(11-18)	JEF-TP 2/11(4) JAW; JEF-TP 2/18(17) JAW
CROW, species	(4-4)	JEF 1 rep(5)
MARTIN, Purple	(11-25)	JEF-TP 2/11(9) JAW; JEF-PI 2/25(1) JAW
SWALLOW, Tree	(4-18)	JEF 2/4(1) JAW; JEF-TP 2/4(17) JAW; JEF-TP 2/11(42) JAW; JEF-TP 2/18(2) JAW
CHICKADEE, Carolina	(11-11)	JEF 1 rep(1)
CREEPER, Brown	(18-18)	JEF-BMT 2/18(1) RHJ
WREN, Carolina	(3-18)	JEF 3 reps(7)
WREN, Winter	(12-12)	JEF-SW 2/12(2) CD
KINGLET, Golden-crowned	(3-12)	JEF-SW 2/3(1) JAW; JEF-SW 2/12(1) CD
KINGLET, Ruby-crowned	(4-25)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 23 reps(31)
GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray	(3-3)	JEF 1 rep(1)
BLUEBIRD, Eastern	(3-18)	JEF 7 reps(26)
THRUSH, Hermit	(12-12)	JEF 1 rep(4)
ROBIN, American	(1-28)	JEF 44 reps(1597)
MOCKINGBIRD, Northern	(1-25)	JEF 11 reps(132)
STARLING, European	(4-25)	JEF 6 reps(192)
PIPIT, American	(3-25)	JEF 5 reps(31)
PIPIT, Sprague's	(18-18)	JEF 2/18(2) GD; JEF 2/18(2) SM
WAXWING, Cedar	(1-25)	JEF 8 reps(1136); ORA 5 reps(643); SAB 2 reps(660)
WARBLER, Orange-crowned	(3-18)	JEF 5 reps(13)
WARBLER, Yellow-rumped	(1-27)	JEF 22 reps(198)
WARBLER, Pine	(2-23)	JEF 19 reps(40)
YELLOWTHROAT, Common	(11-11)	JEF 1 rep(3)
TOWHEE, Spotted	(12-12)	JEF-SW 2/12(1) CD
SPARROW, Chipping	(8-23)	JEF 4 reps(28)
SPARROW, Savannah	(3-25)	JEF 7 reps(324)
SPARROW, Song	(3-18)	JEF 4 reps(14)
SPARROW, Swamp	(3-18)	JEF 5 reps(15)
SPARROW, White-throated	(3-28)	JEF 26 reps(178)

SPARROW, White-crowned	(4-4)	JEF 1 rep(4)
CARDINAL, Northern	(4-18)	JEF 3 reps(14)
BLACKBIRD, Red-winged	(2-25)	HAI 1 rep(60); JEF 6 reps(582)
MEADOWLARK, Eastern	(4-18)	JEF 2 reps(10)
MEADOWLARK species	(4-18)	JEF 3 reps(31)
BLACKBIRD, Brewer's	(4-4)	JEF 2/4(20) JAW
GRACKLE, Common	(2-25)	HAI 1 rep(10); JEF 6 reps(268)
GRACKLE, Boat-tailed	(3-18)	JEF 3 reps(83)
GRACKLE, Great-tailed	(3-25)	JEF 7 reps(1412)
GRACKLE, Gt./Boat tailed	(18-18)	JEF 1 rep(100)
COWBIRD, Brown-headed	(4-4)	JEF 1 rep(21)
ORIOLE, Baltimore	(11-11)	JEF-TP 2/11(1) JAW
FINCH, House	(3-28)	JEF 20 reps(81)
GOLDFINCH, American	(3-28)	JEF 33 reps(725)
SPARROW, House	(1-27)	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 6 reps(34)

Number of Species 132
Number of Individuals 28914

County Abbreviations

HAI – Hardin; JEF – Jefferson; ORA – Orange; SAB – Sabine

Location Codes

BMT – Beaumont; MCFW – McFaddin NWR; NEDR – Nederland; ORG – Orange; PI – Pleasure Island, Port Arthur; PTA – Port Arthur; SILS – Silsbee; SRSP – Sea Rim State Park; SW – Sabine Woods; TP – Tyrrell Park incl. Cattail Marsh; TX87 – Texas 87 Pt. Arthur-Sabine Pass-Sea Rim SP

Observer Abbreviations

CD – Carolyn Dill; GD – Gerald Duhon; JAW – John Whittle; JFW – Jana Whittle; JL – Jeannie Lanclos; JP – John Park; LH – Levie Horton; MTG – Melanie Goetsell; RHJ – Rose Ann and Harrison Jordan; SM – Steve Mayes

Field Trip to Bolivar Flats – March 17, 2007

The great thing about the annual spring field trip to Bolivar Flats is the chance to combine it with a trip to the migrant traps of High Island. The combination of these two very different habitats give a very different look at spring migration and give the chance for a big day list of birds. This is exactly what the Golden Triangle Audubon Society did.

Starting out at Bolivar Flats brought a nice surprise: American Golden-Plover. This is normally a bird of pastures and short grass fields so one on the beach was a bit of a surprise. This sometimes happens during migration when birds are tired and land in the first available area. Having the Golden-Plover on the beach allowed for easy comparison to its close cousin, the Black-bellied Plover. The slighter build and smaller bill of the Golden was noted along with a lack of the black “wing-pits” sported by the Black-bellied.

Some birds were notable by their absence. Though there were plenty of gulls around and no shortage of Forster's Tern, other Tern species were hard to come by. Some Royal Terns and a few Caspian Terns were spotted and an early Least Tern was noted but Common, Sandwich and Gull-billed Terns remained elusive. Later in the day, more than a few Black Terns – a good number for mid March – would be added to the list as they followed in the wake of barges plying the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (to give it its full official title). Small

Bonaparte's Gulls and large Herring Gulls were seen on the day along with the more numerous Laughing and Ring-billed Gulls. Another bird missed on the day was Reddish Egret. Though this species can be hard to come by in Jefferson County, it is usually a guarantee at Bolivar but not on this day.

Rafts of ducks offshore were searched through scopes. Red-breasted Mergansers were plentiful and Lesser Scaup even more numerous. No Scoters could be located despite a good effort. Good eyes did spot a Northern Gannet or two (conservatively recorded as *Sulid* species) at the outer limits of vision. Also in the surf were something that Bolivar is well known for: American Avocets. These handsome shorebirds were nearing full breeding plumage and were present in numbers, several thousand strong.

Small plovers were sought out and all four of the target species were located. Normally, Snowy Plovers are the hardest of the four to locate but, on this day, they were quite easy to find. This allowed for easy comparison to the endangered Piping Plovers present on the beach. Some of the Piping Plovers were sporting colored leg bands put there by researchers who captured the birds as nestlings. The bands allow for identification of individuals and let the researchers track the birds on their wintering grounds and during migration. Two of the banded individuals have been

identified. One was banded as a chick by Dr. Cheri Gratto-Trevor's group at a wetland in southern Saskatchewan known to the researchers as "Prairie Chicken." The other identified bird was also a chick banded in 2006, this one on the Gavins Point Reach of the Missouri River by Dr. Dan Catlin's group from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and University. We assume the location refers to one of the few unmodified reaches of the Missouri River where it forms the border between South Dakota and Nebraska just west of Yankton, South Dakota and downstream of the Gavin's Point Dam which forms the Lewis and Clark Lake. Semipalmated Plovers and Wilson's Plovers were also seen on the Flats though, perhaps, in smaller numbers than expected.

A good number of other species were located on Bolivar Flats on the trip including shorebirds like the numerous Sanderlings and Dunlin and the less numerous Red Knot and Ruddy Turnstones. Marbled Godwits were easily seen along with Short-billed Dowitchers and Long-billed Curlew. Songbirds are also present on the beach (in smaller numbers) and were seen on this trip. Horned Larks were flushed near the vegetation line while Barn Swallows swooped overhead. Although we did not search through the marsh extensively, we did not find any Sharp-tailed or Seaside Sparrows. Huge pelicans, both the wintering American Whites and the resident Browns, loafed on the beach and Neotropic Cormorants fished in the surf. A Merlin watched over it all from a stump behind the dunes.

Moving away from the Flats, the rest of the Bolivar Peninsula also has much to offer. Port Bolivar produced good looks at Common Loon and a couple of American Oystercatchers blending into the oyster beds remarkably well. Gadwall were also seen there in some numbers. Bob's Road revealed Belted Kingfisher. Yacht Basin Road gave the group Clapper Rail and Osprey and Rollover Pass showed lots of Black Skimmers skimming the bay while Northern Rough-winged and Tree Swallows zoomed overhead. The rookery islands at Rollover Pass were beginning to show signs of the nesting activity that will be in full swing in a month or so.

The second half of the trip moved away from the beach and into the coastal woodlots. Boy Scout Woods was the first stop and the group was immediately rewarded with Black-and-White Warbler and Yellow-throated Vireo. Soon a golden Prothonotary Warbler popped in for great looks, one of the highlights of the early spring for any birder! Further exploration would turn up Northern Parula and Louisiana Waterthrush along with non-warblers like American Goldfinch and Cedar Waxwing.

Heading into Smith Oaks, allowed for more species to be added to the day's list. A couple of early Eastern Kingbirds rewarded the group with great looks. The rookery always provides great birding so the group headed that way. Pairs of Great and Snowy Egrets, Tricolored and Little Blue Herons along with Neotropic Cormorants and Anhingas gurgled and babbled and generally made life entertaining. And of course, there were good numbers of the Roseate Spoonbills which have always been one of the main attractions at the rookery. Common Moorhens and American Coots swam around the nest trees with a few Blue-winged Teal and Pied-billed Grebes. Hurricane Rita did a lot of damage to the trees that the birds use in the rookery, and there are many fewer "slots" forks suitable for nesting. Perhaps the birds will use the far

bank and other areas that are relatively undisturbed. But we suspect photographers had better get their closed-up shots this year. Along the far shore several more bright Prothonotary Warblers danced along the waters edge. Even from that distance the glowing yellow of the male birds was obvious. By the time we had finished on the levees, we had found at least sixteen, all males.

With that, the group decided to head north away from the coast but the day was not quite over with. The last bit of birding energy was used to scan a field along Highway 124 and appreciate ~200 American Golden-Plovers. This was more typical habitat for the species during migration and provided a nice end to the days birding. The day was wrapped up with a meal at Al-T's and a bird count down. When the count was done (and the food eaten) more than 100 species were totaled and another great birding day on the Bolivar Peninsula was at an end.

The following species were observed on the day.

Gadwall (36); Duck, Mottled (1); Teal, Blue-winged (3); Scaup, Lesser (105); Merganser, Red-breasted (55); Loon, Common (1); Grebe, Pied-Billed (6); Sulid Species (4); Pelican, American White (75); Pelican, Brown (150); Cormorant, Neotropic (111); Cormorant, Double-Crested (1); Anhinga (11); Heron, Great Blue (12); Egret, Great (53); Egret, Snowy (55); Heron, Little Blue (20); Heron, Tricolored (51); Egret, Cattle (1); Ibis, White (20); Spoonbill, Roseate (58); Vulture, Black (4); Vulture, Turkey (38); Osprey (2); Hawk, Red-tailed (4); Kestrel, American (1); Merlin (1); Rail, Clapper (1); Moorhen, Common (3); Coot, American (3); Plover, Black-bellied (251); Golden-Plover, American (201); Plover, Snowy (15); Plover, Wilson's (2); Plover, Semipalmated (6); Plover, Piping (50); Killdeer (2); Oystercatcher, American (10); Stilt, Black-necked (20); Avocet, American (2200); Yellowlegs, Greater (3); Willet (331); Curlew, Long-billed (4); Godwit, Marbled (41); Turnstone, Ruddy (20); Sanderling (250); Sandpiper, Western (8); Sandpiper, Peep (20); Dunlin (25); Dowitcher, Short-Billed (17); Dowitcher Species (3); Gull, Laughing (293); Gull, Bonaparte's (3); Gull, Ring-billed (127); Gull, Herring (11); Tern, Least (1); Tern, Caspian (1); Tern, Black (8); Tern, Forster's (310); Tern, Royal (50); Skimmer, Black (303); Pigeon, Rock (10); Collared-Dove, Eurasian (3); Kingfisher, Belted (3); Woodpecker, Red-bellied (1); Sapsucker, Yellow-bellied (3); Woodpecker, Downy (3); Kingbird, Eastern (2); Shrike, Loggerhead (2); Vireo, Yellow-throated (1); Jay, Blue (2); Lark, Horned (5); Martin, Purple (1); Swallow, Tree (10); Swallow, N. Rough-winged (15); Swallow, Barn (27); Wren, Carolina (2); Kinglet, Ruby-crowned (3); Gnatcatcher, Blue-gray (4); Thrush, Hermit (2); Catbird, Gray (1); Mockingbird, Northern (4); Starling, European (120); Waxwing, Cedar (3); Warbler, Orange-crowned (2); Parula, Northern (1); Warbler, Yellow-rumped (12); Warbler, Black-And-White (6); Warbler, Prothonotary (19); Waterthrush, Louisiana (1); Sparrow, Savannah (3); Sparrow, Swamp (1); Cardinal, Northern (3); Blackbird, Red-winged (21); Meadowlark Species (1); Grackle, Great-tailed (1); Grackle, Great/Boat-tailed. (1); Cowbird, Brown-headed (1); Goldfinch, American (5); Sparrow, House (3).

Steve Mayes

Threats to East Texas Forests

[The following exchange that took place on TEXBIRDS on March 1, 2007 is worthy of a wider audience, highlighting as it does a issue that impacts our area.]

As John Arvin noted earlier, the forests and forest industry of East Texas are undergoing radical change. All of the major timber companies (like the paper companies in Maine) are divesting themselves of forest lands they have owned and managed for decades. Temple-Inland is the latest of these companies to begin the process of divesting itself of its timber lands (the announcement came on Monday as I attended meetings in Jefferson and Nacogdoches). This will impact over 1.1 million acres in East Texas, including some of the most sensitive woodlands (particularly long-leaf pine) that have been protected by this company for generations.

The reason is simple - pressure from Wall Street and outside investors (in this case, corporate raider Carl Icahn). The Conservation Fund and others have been working with companies such as Temple-Inland on a series of conservation purchases, and I have been involved directly with them in an East Texas project (the Texas Pineywoods Experience) involving communities from Beaumont to Jefferson. But I must be honest in admitting that the latest news from Temple-Inland has placed us in a difficult position. Once we thought that we might have a few years within which to work; in truth, this time frame has been reduced to months.

These divestitures are a once in a lifetime (or century) opportunity to conserve the East Texas forests in some semblance of their original form. Yes, this work clearly impacts a significant component of the birdlife of our state. Bachman's Sparrow, Red-cockaded Woodpecker, American Swallow-tailed Kite, Brown-headed Nuthatch, and Swainson's Warbler are just of a few of the East Texas species that depend on these forests for their existence. Yet we Texans are directly impacted as well. These East Texas watersheds (Sabine west to the Trinity and San Jacinto) generate most of the freshwater in the state. Houston, for example, receives the majority of its drinking water from one East Texas river, the Trinity. Galveston Bay depends on this same river from most of its freshwater inflow. There is a long list of ecological services these forests provide, from carbon sequestration to flood control. To be blunt, the birds and people of East Texas are intertwined in their dependence on healthy forests, and these very forests are now at risk.

We will all continue to do what we can to pursue the conservation of these irreplaceable resources. But I must admit that at times even I can be discouraged. At the same time that Texas is selling off its forest heritage 19 new reservoirs are being proposed to squeeze the last drops of water from these same watersheds. This is not to mention the uncontrolled development that continues unabated along our coast, or the long reach of Austin and San Antonio into the cedar brakes of the Texas Hill Country. Our time to fiddle has past. If we (by we I mean those who love our state) do not act now we might as well accept our fate and enjoy the last days of what was once a remarkable landscape.

Ted Eubanks, Galveston

I spent 33 years in that East Texas forest land and pretty much took it for granted. After all, it was very similar to what I grew up around in Georgia and South Carolina. Even as a birder I doubt that I ever fully appreciated how special those forests are and have been for so many years. Now, as I sit in very different habitat a goodly number of miles away, I have a much better understanding of what is tied up in those Pineywoods we all just assumed would always be there.

As Ted has pointed out so well in his post, Texas is at a critical point in its environmental history. If those forests are lost, a lot of really significant birdlife will also be lost. (And there are host of other reasons for protecting such habitat) I hope we can all stand up and say "Enough!" What is in danger of being lost will not be seen again in our lifetime or the lifetimes of our children.

Dick Payne, Colorado Springs, CO

Concur on the macro level, but its important to be careful in how the issues are framed and expressed. Do we really want timber and paper corporations to continue to hold the tracts? Currently the tracts are in control of corporations for the express purpose of cutting for profit. Some of the corps are very conservation minded, some are not, but changes in management and markets can change corporate philosophy almost overnight. Some of these "pine forests" used to contain huge hardwoods, which were removed intentionally by the corps to maximize the pine harvest. They are selling because cutting is not as profitable at the moment as selling. That can change in a hurry. Likewise, currently, the US Forest Service exists under the Department of Agriculture which views its properties as a crop. Actually, this is an opportunity for a good outcome depending on how the transition is managed.

What are proposed outcomes?

Jeff Mundy, Austin, Texas

Jeff is correct on one level, but it is important to understand the implications of these divestitures. In most cases, the traditional timber companies managed the lands for long-term returns. Whether or not you agree with the traditional system, you must consider the impacts of that which is replacing it. In most cases timber lands are being purchased by a variety of timber investment management organizations (TIMOs). These firms are interested in short-term returns on investment, and about the only way to accelerate a return on investment in timber land is to cut trees and sell the dirt. This is not to say that there are not responsible TIMOs in the industry, but they are, in my experience, the rarities.

The solution from a conservation perspective is simple - buy the land. But in Texas we are talking about tens, even hundreds of millions of dollars that will be needed. I do hope that we can avoid the traditional argument among Texas conservationists about the means and simply agree on an end - the conservation of our East Texas forest heritage.

Ted Eubanks, Galveston

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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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