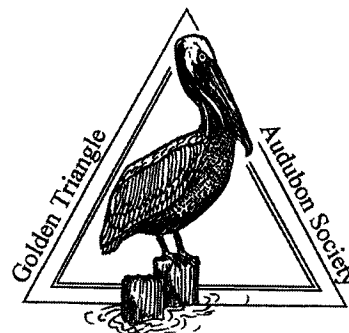


# The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 14 No. 4

April 2008

**Membership Meeting  
Thursday, April 17, 2008  
7:00 PM**

**Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont**

**Spring Migrants of Southeast Texas 2006-2007  
Levie Horton**

Levie will present a slideshow of photographs from the 2006 and 2007 spring migrations in Southeast Texas. As most of you know Levie was photographing in the Boy Scout Woods Bird Sanctuary in High Island, Texas on April 29, 2006 when a strong line of thunderstorms swept quickly across Southeast Texas grounding large numbers of spring migrants along the upper Texas coast. Levie photographed many different species including colorful males in breeding plumage, females and immature males of many different species. During 2007, he added several new species which were not photographed in 2006.

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

## **Sabine Woods — We appreciate all who helped**

Nineteen volunteers – a record number – participated in the Sabine Woods Work Day on Saturday March 15. Before the Work Day, however, Howard Davis used his tractor and brushhog to mow all the main trails and meadows, and also to clear a heavily overgrown section of the northwest corner of the sanctuary. (We try to clear the back sections on a staggered schedule as conditions permit, and this section was somewhat overdue and extensively infested with McCartney Rose. We also have three or four meadow areas that we are currently mowing more often than we eventually will in order to defeat the McCartney Rose that was widespread in them.)

On the work day, we swept the boardwalks, more closely mowed the main trails with a riding mower, cleared and trimmed along the edges of all the trails inside the woods, reopened one trail made difficult by Hurricane Humberto last September, cleared a few fallen limbs, restored the water supply and controls to usable status, and did a lot of improvement in the newer western oaks, including preparing/restoring some trails, cutting Mustang grape vine that threatened oaks, and trimming the lower branches of many of the oaks.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Howard Davis and to all those who helped: Jim Armacost, John Haynes, Levie Horton, Pat and Don Jeane, Harrison Jordan, Gary Kelley, Carol Lynn and Andy Loker, Bill Manhart, Steve Mayes, Wendy Mires, Donna and Paul Monk, Richard Orgeron, Daniel Reed, Sherrie Roden, and Jana Whittle. I also need to pass along thanks received from Ron Weeks, President of Texas Ornithological Society and Brent Ortego, Sanctuary Committee Chair.

A delightful consequence of the Work Day was Jana's finding a Fork-tailed Flycatcher along Pilot Station Road in mid-afternoon.

*John A. Whittle*

## *The Brown Pelican*

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Golden Triangle  
Audubon Society

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

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## Calendar of Events

**Yellow Rail walks at Anahuac NWR.**  
The Refuge and the Friends of Anahuac are again conducting Yellow Rail walks as follows:

**Sun. April 6 7:00 AM and 4:00 PM**

**Sat. April 12 7:00 AM and 4:00 PM**

**Sun. April 20 7:00 AM and 4:00 PM**

The goal is to provide an opportunity to see some of the most elusive birds in Texas, the Yellow and Black Rail. Also seen regularly are Sora, Virginia Rail, and Clapper Rail on the walks.

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 Michele Whitbeck at 409-252-4311 ext. 27.

**Thursday April 17, 2008.**  
**Membership Meeting.** See page 1 for details.

**Saturday April 19. Field Trip to Sabine Woods and Sabine Pass Area.**

This trip will look for Neotropical migrants, and does not necessitate extensive walking.

We will 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 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 donation 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.

**Saturday May 10. North American Spring Migration Count.** Contact John Whittle ([john.whittle@lamar.edu](mailto: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.

## Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank a number of people who made monetary donations for refreshments for providing the refreshments at the February meeting. **We need volunteers to bring all items for April and the remaining spring 2008 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 Jennifer Armacost at (409) 790-7222 (or email her at [armacostj@yahoo.com](mailto:armacostj@yahoo.com)) **as far in advance as possible.** Please help if you can!

## Fork-tailed Flycatcher

On Saturday, March 15, Jana Whittle discovered a Fork-tailed Flycatcher on Pilot Station Road in Sabine Pass (Jefferson County). The bird was flycatching from the utility wires on the west side of the road from about 0.6 miles to about 0.9 miles from the bridge over Texas Bayou. That is where the road runs right along the edge of the ship channel (the Sabine-Neches Waterway) somewhat protected by a levee of dirt and concrete rubble and immediately before the main lines of

Salt Cedars lining the rest of the road begin.

Don Verser posted seeing the bird on Sunday March 16 in the MAD LTD Rig repair yard that is about one quarter mile nearer the bridge than the location the previous day.

However, by about mid-day, the bird was being seen close to where the line of Salt Cedars begins, or about 0.9 miles from the bridge. Presumably because of the high wind, the bird was perching low on the back (west) side of the Salt Cedars on the right (west) side of the road close to where the Salt Cedars begin. The bird remained essentially in this location for the rest of the day. It occasionally made flycatching flights that ended with the bird descending into the marsh vegetation 100 yards west of the road. It would remain there, not visible from the road, for a few minutes but would return thereafter to the Salt Cedars. As darkness fell, it was apparently using the Salt Cedars a little further down the road.

The bird was still there Monday March 17, and was photographed by Greg Lavaty on Tuesday morning, March 18, but we received no reports of it being seen subsequently.

An interesting feature of the plumage observed well was that the distal one inch (approx) of the underside of both long tail feathers are a white/light brown color for that one inch. The primaries and wing coverts also show a brownish tint that appears not to be an artifact of the strong light.

A TEXBIRDS posting by Justin Eby-Bosler may be useful in assessing the sub-species (and thus origin) of the Flycatcher. Two (of four) subspecies are migratory; *savana* nesting as far south as Southern Argentina in the austral summer (our winter) and migrating north to extreme northern South America in the austral winter (our summer); and *monachus*, breeding from southern Mexico to north-central Brazil in our summer and withdrawing southwards in our winter. There are differences in the primary feathers that distinguish between the two migratory sub-species, but we have not seen any pictures of the underside of the spread wing. Here are excerpts from the post:

Excerpts from McCaskie and Patten 1994 that may be useful in

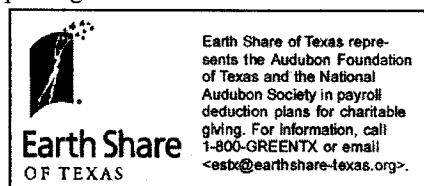
assessing the subspecies of the Sabine Pass Fork-tail:

"Only very young birds with exceedingly short tails prior to their post-juvinal molt, such as young *savana* encountered in spring and young *monachus* encountered in early winter, can be safely aged on the basis of their short tails alone (they can wander while in this plumage)."

"Zimmer (1937) stated that short-tailed juveniles, prior to their post-juvinal molt, have brownish rather than black caps, much brown in the wings, a generally brownish wash to the upperparts, a light buffy wash on the underparts, and extensive brown rather than black on the rump and uppertail coverts."

Although the cap appears black in the Sabine Pass Fork-tail, there appears to be some brown flecking and some missing feathers (explaining the white patches). All other visible features of this bird in the posted photos seem to match Zimmer's description above. Given that Pyle (Identification Guide to Birds of N.A., Part I) states timing of molt in *savana* is between April-July, it may be safe to assume that this bird (in March) is just entering its post juvinal molt. In one of Lavaty's photos, it appears as if the outer primary coverts on the left wing are sheathed (emergence of new feathers). The pale gape, classic of juveniles, is evident in most of the photos. If the Sabine Pass Fork-tail is indeed a juvenile of the race *savana*, then it has overshot its wintering range to end up in Texas. "We also suspect that birds occurring in spring and summer are short-tailed juveniles and full-tailed adults which overshot their wintering grounds during "fall" migration!" (McCaskie and Patten 1994).

"Short-tailed individuals in Texas in winter are likely first-year birds of the northern race *monachus* that moved north instead of south during their first attempt at migration." -- not a good fit for the Sabine Pass Fork-tail based on date of occurrence and condition of plumage."



## 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 23, with April 24 and April 25 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 or more, \$.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 supporting us again. Please contact me at 3015 Nashville Ave, Nederland, TX 77627 or at [john.whittle@lamar.edu](mailto: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 2008

**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:** An interesting February. The highlights were the numerous eagles, both Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle, in west Jefferson County and on FM105 near Vidor, covered in the article in last month's issue. The sightings below include the continuation of all three US species of scoter off McFaddin Beach, and good numbers of Redheads in Clam Lake at McFaddin NWR. We have left the listing of the hummingbirds in the detailed format so that the full extent of wintering hummingbirds can be appreciated. The yards in which they are being seen do have some flowering hummingbird plants and are yards in which feeders have been maintained throughout the winter for more than one year. It seems hummingbirds have good memories, and also that the presence of one hummingbird in a yard attracts others. Other notable items include the expected appearance of Purple Martins, and the continuing presence of well above average numbers of Vesper Sparrows.

<b>WHISTLING-DUCK, Blk-bellied</b> (29-29)	JEF 1 rep(30)		
<b>GOOSE, White-fronted</b> (3-17)	JEF 2 reps(17)		
<b>GOOSE, Snow</b> (16-24)	HAI 1 rep(100); JEF 3		
reps(18)			
<b>GOOSE, White</b> (3-17)	JEF 2 reps(1070)		
<b>GOOSE, Cackling</b> (10-17)	JEF 2/10(15) JAW; JEF		
2/17(25) SRJW			
<b>GOOSE, Canada</b> (21-21)	JEF 1 rep(28)		
<b>DUCK, Wood</b> (5-5)	HAI-SILS 2/5(4) MG		
<b>GADWALL</b> (9-24)	JEF 4 reps(20)		
<b>MALLARD</b> (3-3)	JEF 1 rep(4)		
<b>DUCK, Mottled</b> (2-24)	JEF 5 reps(16)		
<b>TEAL, Blue-winged</b> (24-24)	JEF 1 rep(20)		
<b>SHOVELER, Northern</b> (3-24)	JEF 3 reps(200); ORA 1		
rep(2)			
<b>PINTAIL, Northern</b> (3-17)	JEF 2 reps(1020)		
<b>TEAL, Green-winged</b> (3-24)	JEF 3 reps(271)		
<b>CANVASBACK</b> (9-24)	JEF-MCFW 2/9(1) JAW;		
JEF-MCFW 2/10(20) SM; JEF-PI 2/24(800) SM			
<b>REDHEAD</b> (9-24)	JEF-MCFW 2/9(44) JAW;		
JEF-MCFW 2/10(50) SM; JEF-MCFW 2/24(20) JAW			
<b>DUCK, Ring-necked</b> (9-10)	JEF 2 reps(60)		
<b>SCAUP, Greater</b> (9-24)	JEF-MCFW 2/9(6) JAW;		
JEF-MCFW 2/10(2) SM; JEF-PI 2/24(2) SM			
<b>SCAUP, Lesser</b> (2-24)	JEF 4 reps(345)		
<b>SCOTER, Surf</b> (2-9)	JEF-MCFW 2/2(10) JAW;		
JEF-SRSP 2/2(8) JAW; JEF-MCFW 2/9(30) GD			
<b>SCOTER, White-winged</b> (2-2)	JEF-MCFW 2/2(1) JAW;		
JEF-SRSP 2/2(3) JAW			
<b>SCOTER, Black</b> (2-2)	JEF-MCFW 2/2(10) JAW;		
JEF-SRSP 2/2(10) JAW			
<b>BUFFLEHEAD</b> (24-24)	JEF 1 rep(30)		
<b>GOLDENEYE, Common</b> (9-10)	JEF-MCFW 2/9(8) GD;		
JEF-MCFW 2/10(1) SM			
<b>MERGANSE, Hooded</b> (19-19)	JEF-PI 2/19(6) JA		
<b>DUCK, Ruddy</b> (24-24)	JEF 1 rep(3000)		
<b>LOON, Common</b> (2-24)	JEF 3 reps(16)		
<b>GREBE, Pied-billed</b> (9-24)	JEF 6 reps(11)		
<b>GREBE, Horned</b> (24-24)	JEF-MCFW 2/24(1) JAW;		
JEF-PI 2/24(5) SM			
<b>GREBE, Eared</b> (24-24)	JEF 1 rep(3)		
<b>GANNET, Northern</b> (9-9)	JEF-MCFW 2/9(40) GD;		
JEF-MCFW 2/9(1) JAW			
<b>PELICAN, Amer. White</b> (2-24)	JEF 5 reps(598); ORA 1		
rep(6)			
<b>PELICAN, Brown</b> (2-24)	JEF 6 reps(37)		
<b>CORMORANT, Neotropic</b> (6-24)	JEF 4 reps(548); ORA 1		
rep(4)			
<b>CORMORANT, Double-crested</b> (24-24)	JEF 2 reps(70)		
<b>CORMORANT, Species</b> (9-9)	JEF 1 rep(1)		
<b>BITTERN, American</b> (24-24)	JEF-PI 2/24(1) SM		
<b>HERON, Great Blue</b> (2-24)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 9		
reps(35); ORA 1 rep(2)			
<b>EGRET, Great</b> (1-24)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 13		
reps(483); ORA 1 rep(11)			
<b>EGRET, Snowy</b> (3-24)	JEF 6 reps(208)		
<b>HERON, Little Blue</b> (17-24)	JEF 2 reps(3)		
<b>HERON, Tricolored</b> (24-24)	JEF 1 rep(4)		
<b>EGRET, Reddish</b> (17-17)	JEF 1 rep(1)		
<b>NIGHT-HERON, Black-crown.</b> (24-24)	JEF 1 rep(4)		
<b>IBIS, White</b> (6-24)	JEF 5 reps(1370); ORA 1		
rep(5)			
<b>IBIS, White-faced</b> (21-24)	JEF 2 reps(101)		
<b>IBIS, Plegadis</b> (2-17)	JEF 5 reps(671); ORA 1		
rep(6)			
<b>SPOONBILL, Roseate</b> (6-24)	JEF 2/22(15) RHJ; JEF-PI		
2/24(30) SM; ORA-ORG 2/6(1) KS			
<b>VULTURE, Black</b> (2-24)	HAI 2 reps(3); JEF 2		
reps(7); ORA 1 rep(3)			
<b>VULTURE, Turkey</b> (2-27)	HAI 9 reps(19); JEF 9		
reps(56); ORA 1 rep(5)			
<b>OSPREY</b> (2-24)	JEF-MCFW 2/2(1) JAW;		
JEF-MCFW 2/9(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 2/9(4) JAW; JEF 2/17(3) RHJ;			
JEF-MCFW 2/24(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 2/24(1) JAW; ORA-ORG			
2/6(1) KS			
<b>KITE, White-tailed</b> (22-22)	JEF 1 rep(2)		
<b>EAGLE, Bald</b> (3-18)	JAS 2/18(2) JAW; JEF		
2/9(1) SBE; JEF 2/10(1) SR; JEF 2/13(1) SBE; ORA 2/3(1) SBE;			
ORA 2/4(1) SBE; ORA 2/5(2) JFW; ORA 2/10(4) JHH; ORA			
2/13(1) SBE			
<b>HARRIER, Northern</b> (1-24)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 9		
reps(58); ORA 1 rep(1)			
<b>HAWK, Sharp-shinned</b> (6-6)	ORA-ORG 2/6(1) KS		
<b>HAWK, Cooper's</b> (4-24)	HAI-SILS 2/17(1) MG; JEF-		
BMT 2/4(1) RHJ; JEF 2/10(1) JAW; JEF-BMT 2/19(1) RHJ; JEF-			
PI 2/24(2) SM			
<b>ACCIPITER species</b> (9-9)	JEF-MCFW 2/9(1) JAW		
<b>HAWK, Red-shouldered</b> (7-24)	HAI 3 reps(4); JEF 6		
reps(6)			
<b>HAWK, White-tailed</b> (3-12)	JEF 2/3(1) JAW; JEF		
2/12(1) JP			
<b>HAWK, Red-tailed</b> (1-24)	HAI 3 reps(3); JEF 19		
reps(140)			
<b>HAWK, Red-tailed (Krider's)</b> (17-17)	JEF 2/17(1) SRJW		
<b>EAGLE, Golden</b> (3-13)	JEF 2/3(1) MWI; JEF 2/9(1)		
SBE; JEF 2/13(1) SBE			
<b>CARACARA, Crested</b> (3-28)	JEF 2/3(4) JAW; JEF-TX87		
2/9(1) JAW; JEF 2/10(1) JAW; JEF 2/12(2) JP; JEF 2/14(2) JP;			
JEF-PI 2/19(1) JA; JEF 2/27(1) JP; JEF 2/28(2) JP			
<b>KESTREL, American</b> (1-24)	JEF 11 reps(74); ORA 1		
rep(1)			
<b>MERLIN</b> (13-24)	HAI-SILS 2/13(1) MG; HAI-		
SILS 2/19(1) MG; JEF 2/17(1) RHJ; JEF 2/17(3) SRJW; JEF			
2/22(1) RHJ; JEF-TX87 2/24(1) JAW			
<b>FALCON, Peregrine</b> (10-10)	JEF 2/10(1) JAW		

<b>RAIL, Clapper</b>	(22-22)	JEF 1 rep(1)	<b>FLICKER, Northern</b>	(4-27)	HAI 6 reps(9); JEF 2
<b>SORA</b>	(6-6)	ORA-ORG 2/6(1) KS	reps(2)		
<b>MOORHEN, Common</b>	(9-24)	JEF 4 reps(24)	<b>WOODPECKER, Pileated</b>	(15-25)	HAI 7 reps(8)
<b>COOT, American</b>	(6-24)	JEF 4 reps(205); ORA 1 rep(2)	<b>PHOEBE, Eastern</b>	(1-24)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 8
<b>CRANE, Sandhill</b>	(3-26)	JEF 2/3(147) JAW; JEF 2/10(2) JAW; JEF 2/12(20) JP; JEF 2/17(34) JP; JEF 2/26(15) JP	reps(33)		
<b>PLOVER, Black-bellied</b>	(2-9)	JEF 2 reps(96)	<b>SHRIKE, Loggerhead</b>	(2-24)	JEF 10 reps(67)
<b>PLOVER, Snowy</b>	(2-24)	JEF-MCFW 2/2(18) JAW; JEF-MCFW 2/9(5) JAW; JEF-SRSP 2/9(5) JAW; JEF-MCFW 2/24(2) JAW	<b>VIREO, Blue-headed</b>	(6-10)	JEF 1 rep(1); ORA 1 rep(1)
<b>PLOVER, Semipalmated</b>	(2-9)	JEF 2 reps(24)	<b>JAY, Blue</b>	(3-23)	HAI 8 reps(23); JEF 3
<b>PLOVER, Piping</b>	(2-24)	JEF-MCFW 2/2(10) JAW; JEF-MCFW 2/9(6) JAW; JEF-SRSP 2/9(8) JAW; JEF-MCFW 2/24(4) JAW	reps(3); ORA 1 rep(3)		
<b>KILLDEER</b>	(1-24)	JEF 8 reps(68)	<b>CROW, American</b>	(21-21)	HAI 1 rep(2)
<b>STILT, Black-necked</b>	(6-24)	JEF 2 reps(41); ORA 1 rep(2)	<b>MARTIN, Purple</b>	(6-24)	HAI-SILS 2/24(4) KS; JEF-SW 2/10(1) SM; JEF-TX87 2/24(5) JAW; ORA-ORG 2/6(1) KS
<b>SANDPIPER, Spotted</b>	(24-24)	JEF 1 rep(2)	<b>SWALLOW, Tree</b>	(2-24)	JEF 7 reps(244); ORA 1 rep(98)
<b>YELLOWLEGS, Greater</b>	(3-24)	JEF 5 reps(158)	<b>SWALLOW, Barn</b>	(24-24)	HAI-SILS 2/24(1) KS
<b>WILLET</b>	(2-24)	JEF 4 reps(56)	<b>CHICKADEE, Carolina</b>	(2-26)	HAI 11 reps(59); JEF 4
<b>YELLOWLEGS, Lesser</b>	(16-24)	JEF 2 reps(35)	reps(6); ORA 1 rep(6)		
<b>YELLOWLEGS species</b>	(10-24)	JEF 2 reps(102)	<b>TITMOUSE, Tufted</b>	(6-27)	HAI 12 reps(55)
<b>KNOT, Red</b>	(2-2)	JEF-MCFW 2/2(1) JAW	<b>NUTHATCH, Red-breasted</b>	(20-20)	HAI-SILS 2/20(1) MG
<b>SANDERLING</b>	(2-24)	JEF 3 reps(128)	<b>WREN, Carolina</b>	(6-27)	HAI 12 reps(33); JEF 2
<b>SANDPIPER, Peep</b>	(3-3)	JEF 1 rep(30)	reps(4); ORA 1 rep(1)		
<b>SANDPIPER, Least</b>	(24-24)	JEF 1 rep(7)	<b>WREN, House</b>	(24-24)	JEF-PI 2/24(1) SM
<b>DUNLIN</b>	(2-24)	JEF 3 reps(109)	<b>WREN, Sedge</b>	(2-6)	JEF-SRSP 2/2(1) JAW; ORA-ORG 2/6(2) KS
<b>DOWITCHER, Long-billed</b>	(3-3)	JEF 1 rep(130)	<b>WREN, Marsh</b>	(24-24)	JEF-MCFW 2/24(1) JAW
<b>SNIPE, Wilson's</b>	(10-17)	JEF 4 reps(21)	<b>KINGLET, Golden-crowned</b>	(10-10)	JEF-SW 2/10(1) SM
<b>GULL, Laughing</b>	(2-24)	JEF 7 reps(320); ORA 1 rep(32)	<b>KINGLET, Ruby-crowned</b>	(1-29)	HAI 7 reps(9); JEF 13
<b>GULL, Bonaparte's</b>	(2-24)	JEF 2 reps(111)	reps(14); ORA 1 rep(2)		
<b>GULL, Ring-billed</b>	(2-24)	JEF 5 reps(1054)	<b>GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray</b>	(2-24)	JEF 7 reps(13); ORA 1 rep(2)
<b>GULL, California</b>	(24-24)	JEF-TX87 2/24(1) JAW	<b>BLUEBIRD, Eastern</b>	(1-29)	HAI 20 reps(75); JEF 2
<b>GULL, Herring</b>	(2-24)	JEF 4 reps(25)	reps(10); ORA 1 rep(5)		
<b>TERN, Gull-billed</b>	(24-24)	JEF-PI 2/24(2) SM	<b>THRUSH, Hermit</b>	(15-15)	HAI 1 rep(1)
<b>TERN, Forster's</b>	(2-24)	JEF 5 reps(128); ORA 1 rep(15)	<b>ROBIN, American</b>	(1-29)	HAI 11 reps(20890); JEF 7
<b>TERN, Royal</b>	(2-24)	JEF 3 reps(65)	reps(53); ORA 2 reps(5013)		
<b>PIGEON, Rock</b>	(3-29)	HAI 2 reps(12); JEF 7 reps(70)	<b>CATBIRD, Gray</b>	(1-26)	HAI-SILS 2/1(1) MG; HAI-SILS 2/9(1) MG; HAI-SILS 2/15(1) MG; HAI-SILS 2/26(1) MG
<b>COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian</b>	(3-22)	JEF 7 reps(35)	<b>MOCKINGBIRD, Northern</b>	(1-29)	HAI 9 reps(16); JEF 10
<b>DOVE, White-winged</b>	(2-29)	JEF 12 reps(81)	reps(47); ORA 1 rep(1)		
<b>DOVE, Mourning</b>	(2-29)	HAI 14 reps(77); JEF 8 reps(145); ORA 1 rep(3)	<b>STARLING, European</b>	(2-29)	HAI 4 reps(24); JEF 9
<b>DOVE, Inca</b>	(1-29)	HAI 12 reps(34)	reps(69)		
<b>OWL, Great Horned</b>	(24-24)	JEF-SW 2/24(2) JAW	<b>PIPIP, American</b>	(3-10)	JEF 2 reps(47); ORA 1 rep(7)
<b>HUMMINGBIRD, Black-chin.</b>	(1-27)	JEF-NEDR 2/1(2) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/2(2) JAW; JEF-BMT 2/3(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/4(1) RHJ; JEF-NEDR 2/5(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/6(1) JAW; JEF-BMT 2/7(1) RHJ; JEF-NEDR 2/13(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/14(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/23(1) JFW; JEF-NEDR 2/24(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/26(1) JFW; JEF-NEDR 2/27(1) JAW	<b>WAXWING, Cedar</b>	(2-24)	HAI 10 reps(819); JEF 13
<b>HUMMINGBIRD, Broad-tailed</b>	(5-27)	JEF-NEDR 2/5(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/17(1) SRJW; JEF-NEDR 2/20(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/23(1) JFW; JEF-NEDR 2/26(1) JFW; JEF-NEDR 2/27(1) JAW	reps(285); ORA 1 rep(22)		
<b>HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous</b>	(4-29)	JEF-BMT 2/4(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/5(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/8(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/9(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/12(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/13(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/14(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/17(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/19(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/20(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/21(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/24(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/26(25) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/28(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/29(1) RHJ	<b>WARBLER, Orange-crowned</b>	(1-29)	HAI 7 reps(9); JEF 15
<b>HUMMINGBIRD species</b>	(2-29)	JEF-NEDR 2/2(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/6(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 2/7(1) JAW; JEF-BMT 2/9(1) RHJ; JEF-NEDR 2/9(1) JAW; JEF-BMT 2/10(1) RHJ; JEF-NEDR 2/12(1) JAW; JEF-BMT 2/20(1) RHJ; JEF-NEDR 2/21(1) JAW; JEF-BMT 2/27(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/28(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 2/29(1) JAW	reps(15); ORA 1 rep(2)		
<b>KINGFISHER, Belted</b>	(2-24)	JEF 9 reps(30)	<b>WARBLER, Yellow-rumped</b>	(1-24)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 13
<b>WOODPECKER, Red-bellied</b>	(2-29)	HAI 21 reps(44); JEF 4 reps(6); ORA 1 rep(2)	reps(100); ORA 1 rep(12)		
<b>SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied</b>	(2-29)	HAI 6 reps(6); JEF 1 rep(1); ORA 1 rep(1)	<b>WARBLER, Pine</b>	(1-27)	HAI 19 reps(34); JEF 16
<b>WOODPECKER, Downy</b>	(5-26)	HAI 2 reps(2); JEF 6 reps(8); ORA 1 rep(2)	reps(23); ORA 1 rep(32)		
			<b>YELLOWTHROAT, Common</b>	(9-24)	JEF 4 reps(4)
			<b>SPARROW, Chipping</b>	(1-27)	HAI 25 reps(1344); JEF 4
			reps(28)		
			<b>SPARROW, Vesper</b>	(1-17)	JEF 2/1(1) JAW; JEF 2/3(11) JAW; JEF 2/10(3) JAW; JEF 2/16(2) JAW; JEF 2/17(3) SRJW
			<b>SPARROW, Savannah</b>	(2-24)	JEF 11 reps(228)
			<b>SPARROW, Song</b>	(6-16)	JEF 1 rep(1); ORA 1 rep(1)
			<b>SPARROW, Lincoln's</b>	(3-3)	JEF 1 rep(1)
			<b>SPARROW, Swamp</b>	(6-6)	ORA 1 rep(1)
			<b>SPARROW, White-throated</b>	(3-28)	JEF 10 reps(30)
			<b>SPARROW, White-crowned</b>	(3-21)	JEF 5 reps(62)
			<b>CARDINAL, Northern</b>	(3-29)	HAI 17 reps(888); JEF 6
			reps(19); ORA 1 rep(4)		
			<b>BLACKBIRD, Red-winged</b>	(2-24)	HAI 2 reps(3); JEF 10
			reps(1775); ORA 1 rep(6)		
			<b>MEADOWLARK, Eastern</b>	(3-17)	JEF 2 reps(20); ORA 1 rep(5)
			<b>MEADOWLARK species</b>	(3-17)	JEF 4 reps(150)
			<b>BLACKBIRD, Brewer's</b>	(3-16)	JEF 2/3(10) JAW; JEF 2/16(35) JAW
			<b>BLACKBIRD, Brewer's</b>	(3-16)	JEF 2 reps(45)
			<b>GRACKLE, Common</b>	(17-17)	JEF 1 rep(50)
			<b>GRACKLE, Boat-tailed</b>	(2-24)	JEF 3 reps(77)

<b>GRACKLE, Great-tailed</b> reps(234)	(2-24)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 7
<b>GRACKLE, Gt./Boat-tailed</b>	(3-17)	JEF 3 reps(14)
<b>COWBIRD, Brown-headed</b> reps(78)	(8-24)	HAI 1 rep(4); JEF 3
<b>FINCH, Purple</b> 2/9(1) MG; HAI-SILS 2/22(1) SG	(2-22)	HAI 2/2(1) RHJ; HAI-SILS
<b>FINCH, House</b>	(2-29)	JEF 12 reps(12)
<b>GOLFINCH, American</b> reps(2551)	(1-29)	HAI 28 reps (576) JEF 41
<b>SPARROW, House</b> reps(16)	(3-29)	HAI 4 reps(15); JEF 7
<b>Number of Species</b>		165
<b>Number of Individuals</b>		57369

**County Abbreviations:** HAI — Hardin; JAS — Jasper; JEF — Jefferson; ORA — Orange

**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; TX87 — Texas 87 Pt. Arthur-Sabine Pass-Sea Rim SP

**Observer Abbreviations::** FTSL — Field Trip to Sheldon Lake SP; GD — Gerald Duhon; JA — Jim Armacost; JAW — John Whittle; JFW — Jana Whittle; JHH — John H. Haynes; JJW — John and Jana Whittle; JP — John Park; KS — Ken Sztraky; MG — Melanie Goetsell; MWI — Marsha Williams; RHJ — Rose Ann and Harrison Jordan; SBE — Sheri Bethard; SG — Sherry Gibson; SM — Steve Mayes; SR — Sherrie Roden; SRJW — Sherrie Roden, John Whittle; X — Unknown.

## Field Trip to Bolivar Flats – March 22, 2008

The annual March field trip to Bolivar Flats is timed to catch the early part of spring shorebird migration. The Flats, as usual, produced almost all of the expected species, and a few unusual sights. With a good turnout reaching into double figures, and weather that could not have been more pleasant, it was an excellent trip.

Interesting birds seen on the later stages of the journey along the peninsula to the Flats included a Crested Caracara and a flight of four Sandhill Cranes. The former species has, over the past few years, come to be expected over anywhere along the coastal plain of southeast Texas. Cranes, on the other hand, although they winter in west Galveston Island and on inland areas of Chambers and Jefferson County, are rarely seen on the Bolivar Peninsula itself. Ospreys, on the other hand are expected, and one was on a pole on Rettilon Road devouring its latest catch.

At and near the vehicle barrier we saw a Long-billed Curlew, the first of many we were to see during the day, several Ruddy Turnstones, a species not found anywhere else during the day, and two Wilson's Plovers, confirmed by their thick bills and size larger than the rest of the small plovers. Once the other side of the barrier, attention was turned back to the east to a fairly large flock of scaup loafing in the water just offshore. First, one member of the party found one and then another Surf Scoter in the flock. Others then concentrated on the flock and we eventually concluded that there were at least seven Surf Scoters. An American Oystercatcher was another early find, close to the vehicle barrier rather than at the usual great distance.

A little further into the flats, we began to look at the plovers. Piping Plovers were the most numerous on this occasion, outnumbering all others. Typically, any time between late September and early April, there are well over 100 Piping Plovers on the flats, and we saw at least that many spread over most of the accessible semi-dry areas of the flats. One population of the species is endangered, and the other, the one that breeds in southeast Saskatchewan and surrounding provinces and states and winters mostly along the Texas coast, is threatened. The birds are much more concentrated on their wintering grounds – the flats and other areas of the Texas coast offer abundant food – and therefore are at significant risk from man-made perils at this time of year. Weather, especially water levels are the main threat in Canada.

The latest world-wide population estimate for Wilson's Plover (approximately 5,000 pairs) is less than that for Piping Plover (approximately 8,000 pairs), but, perhaps reflecting the vagaries of endangered species designations, Wilson's Plover is not currently listed. Typical a number of pair breed on Bolivar Flats, and in September, large number concentrate in preparation for migration south for the winter.

One this occasion, there were not very many Semipalmated Plovers in accessible parts of the Flats, although the species preference for wetter parts often means that we do not find the bulk of those present. This species is not endangered or threatened world-wide.

Snowy Plover is a species of concern, even though the populations locally have been on the increase, especially along the beaches of Jefferson County. We only found a small number among the numerous other small plovers. Black-bellied Plovers were scattered throughout the flats, with only a very few showing the earliest traces of molt into their dramatically different summer plumage.

Willetts do not normally attract much attention, even though we hear rumors that the AOU is close to "splitting" the species into a Western Willet and an Eastern Willet. The attention grabber on this day was an all white bird – a leucistic example rather than a true albino since it did have dark eye pigment.

A White-tailed Kite kept our attention for several minutes while it "kited" over the marsh looking, unsuccessfully as far as we could tell, for a meal. It was fearless, vigorously attacking a Northern Harrier that came into the same area of marsh looking for its meal. Other Northern Harriers remained at a respectable distance.

There were numerous gulls and terns on the flats, mostly quite far out and mostly Royal or Forster's Terns, but we eventually managed to find a few Caspian Terns, about 10 Sandwich Terns, three Least Terns (far out and seen by only a few) while two Gull-billed Terns flew over us. At least one Bonaparte's Gull was in the flock, greatly outnumbered by the Laughing Gulls and Ring-billed Gulls, and even by the good number of Herring Gulls present. Black Skimmers were present in numbers but did not venture near us.

When the gull and tern flock rose en masse, we immediately started looking for a cause. It took a little while, but eventually we saw a nice Peregrine Falcon carry a Blue-

winged Teal onto a post and eventually onto the moist flats. We watched with interest as the Peregrine consumed its late breakfast or early lunch.

Marbled Godwits were scattered around the flats, as well as a few more Long-billed Curlews. One of three Whimbrels seen on the day gave us good looks as it flew past. A couple of hundred American Avocets, a modest number for this location, were visible, almost all in near full breeding plumage.

We still hadn't seen any Dowitchers, but looking over towards the North Jetty, we saw a congregation of shorebirds on a sandbar, and concluded that Sanderlings and Short-billed Dowitchers comprised the majority of these birds, and in approximately equal numbers. Western and Least Sandpiper were present, but either in small numbers or, more likely, mostly in places where we could not see them. Dunlins were more numerous, perhaps more so than we realized because they were pretty much scattered everywhere.

We then started thinking about the species we had not seen. Strangely enough, we could not find a single Reddish Egret on or on the vicinity of the flats. We found some later at Rollover Pass, but this experience reinforced our belief that they are more apt to move presumably short distances away than most species on the flats. As we made our way back towards the vehicle barrier along the edge of the vegetation, we did not see any Horned Larks, although we did not make an extensive effort to walk every possible area.

Most of the participants then headed for Fort Travis park for rest rooms and picnic tables for lunch. Our stay there included watching two Ospreys fly over purposefully heading east. A more distant raptor was thought likely to be a Merlin, more based on its size than anything else.

The ponds to the east of Bob's Road (a.k.a., in earlier more leisurely times, Bob's Bait Camp Road) have long been a place to check for birds. There were a good number of birds, including several adult and several immature (white) Little Blue Herons, a number of Blue-winged Teal, and our first Belted Kingfisher of the day.

A quick trip around Gregory Park to look for American Golden Plover was unsuccessful, although several Eastern Meadowlarks were present. Just after returning to Highway 87, a Crested Caracara was noted perched along the north side of the road.

Next, a trip up Yacht Basin Road provided an opportunity to look at the rookery on the island just south of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway in Rollover Bay. The marsh on the east side of Yacht Basin Road was long an almost guaranteed location for Whimbrel, but has become less so in recent years. However, one was easily found on this occasion. An Osprey was perched on one of the power poles. The rookery, although it was still a little on the early side, did contain good numbers of egrets and White Ibis as well as a Black-crowned Night-Heron or two, and a few Roseate Spoonbills.

Rollover Pass itself, on the bay side, produced a good selection of mostly the same gulls and terns that were seen on Bolivar Flats, but also one or two Black Terns. Two or three were also seen feeding in the wake of barges on the Intracoastal. An exposed oyster bed along the west side of the bay held six American Oystercatchers, as well as about 50 Long-billed Curlews and another Whimbrel. Nearby were probably 500 Dunlins and 500 Western Sandpipers. Four

Reddish Egrets. There were about 100 Black Skimmers, another two Ospreys, and about 60 more American Avocets.

Then on to the final stops of the day in High Island, noting an American Kestrel on a wire en route. At Boy Scout Woods, very severely damaged in Hurricane Humberto last September, we saw one Gray Catbird and heard others, saw a couple of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, but the most unexpected bird seen was a very early male Painted Bunting, uncharacteristically frequenting the very top portions of a tall mulberry tree.

At Smith Oaks, a Barn Owl perched in good view for all to see, and then it was onto the rookery. The birds are adapting to the diminution in available trees on the island by moving to the south part of Clay Bottom Pond. In addition to good numbers of Great Egrets, Neotropic Cormorants and smaller numbers of Snowy Egrets, there were about 20 Anhingas. Black-crowned Night Herons lined the far bank.

After watching the comings and goings at the rookery for a while, the field trip came to an end, with slightly over 100 species recorded for the day.

Birds recorded on trip: Gadwall (20); Mottled Duck (7); Blue-winged Teal (51); Scaup species (100); Surf Scoter (7); Red-breasted Merganser (38); Pied-billed Grebe (8); American White Pelican (160); Brown Pelican (74); Neotropic Cormorant (309); Double-crested Cormorant (5); Anhinga (10); Great Blue Heron (5); Great Egret (276); Snowy Egret (61); Little Blue Heron (17); Tricolored Heron (21); Reddish Egret (4); Cattle Egret (1); Green Heron (1); Black-crowned Night-Heron (21); Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (4); White Ibis (51); Plegadis species Ibis (20); Roseate Spoonbill (104); Black Vulture (7); Turkey Vulture (8); Osprey (6); White-tailed Kite (1); Northern Harrier (5); Red-tailed Hawk (3); Crested Caracara (2); American Kestrel (6); Merlin (1); Peregrine Falcon (1); Common Moorhen (5); American Coot (5); Sandhill Crane (4); Black-bellied Plover (75); Snowy Plover (4); Wilson's Plover (3); Semipalmated Plover (6); Piping Plover (100); Killdeer (2); American Oystercatcher (6); Black-necked Stilt (2); American Avocet (260); Spotted Sandpiper (1); Greater Yellowlegs (3); Willet (130); Whimbrel (3); Long-billed Curlew (54); Marbled Godwit (45); Ruddy Turnstone (10); Sanderling (500); Western Sandpiper (501); Least Sandpiper (5); Dunlin (600); Short-billed Dowitcher (500); Laughing Gull (185); Bonaparte's Gull (7); Ring-billed Gull (60); Herring Gull (20); Least Tern (3); Gull-billed Tern (2); Caspian Tern (6); Black Tern (5); Common Tern (3); Forster's Tern (120); Royal Tern (250); Sandwich Tern (30); Black Skimmer (300); Rock Pigeon (25); Eurasian Collared-Dove (4); Mourning Dove (3); Barn Owl (1); Belted Kingfisher (2); Downy Woodpecker (1); Eastern Phoebe (1); Loggerhead Shrike (5); Blue Jay (2); Purple Martin (19); Tree Swallow (5); Barn Swallow (28); Carolina Wren (1); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (1); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (2); Gray Catbird (4); Northern Mockingbird (11); European Starling (13); Yellow-rumped Warbler (10); Common Yellowthroat (1); Savannah Sparrow (19); Swamp Sparrow (1); Northern Cardinal (4); Painted Bunting (1); Red-winged Blackbird (14); Eastern Meadowlark (10); Meadowlark species (1); Boat-tailed Grackle (21); Great-tailed Grackle (57); Great/Boat-tailed Grackle (1); Brown-headed Cowbird (1); House Sparrow (2); 103 species.

*John A. Whittle*

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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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