The Brown Pelican

The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 14 No. 11 November 2008

Annual Meeting
Thursday, November 20, 2008
Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont
7:00 PM,

Come Fly with Me
Shirley and Sid Rucker

Shirley and Sid Rucker are a husband and wife nature photography team, who photograph birds (specializing in hummingbirds), mammals, insects and other nature subjects. They are full time travelers and have traveled the continental United States extensively. Their list of publication credits include national and international magazines, books, and calendars. Frequent publications are: Wildbird magazine, Texas Parks & Wildlife, International Wildlife, Ranger Rick, National Geographic World (cover), National Geographic books, Smithsonian, Donald and Lillian Stokes' "The Hummingbird Book", and Connie Toops' "Hummingbirds: Jewels in Flight".

The slide show will consist of pictures of the birds, stories related to the photography of them, and photographic techniques used. The birds will be from East Texas, then West Texas and finally Yellowstone. It will end with slides of bathing birds with music background.

The Ruckers will have copies of "Hummingbirds of Texas" available for purchase.

As is also our November tradition, this is our potluck dinner meeting, and we ask you to bring something if you are able. We will plan on having the doors open by 6:00 p.m. and the program will start at 7:00 p.m. sharp. This is our annual meeting and we will also be holding our elections.

Elections

At the November meeting, we will hold our annual elections. Because of the disruptions associated with Hurricane Ike, the Nominating Committee has not been able to develop a slate of candidates in time to publish it here. However, if you have any suggestions, or wish to nominate someone, please contact Steve Mayes, who is acting as chair of the Nominating Committee.

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Golden Triangle
Audubon Society

See Web Site for more information www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

The Brown Pelican is published monthly except July by the Golden Triangle Audubon Society, P. O. Box 1292, Nederland, Texas 77627-1292

Calendar of Events

Note that the events listed below are subject to reconfirmation in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike. Please Check the web site at www.goldentriangleaudubon.org for confirmation.

Thursday November 20. Membership Meeting. Shirley and Sid Rucker on Hummingbirds. See page 1.

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank Debbie and John Park, Pat and Don Jeane, Steve Mayes and Christine Sliva for bringing refreshments for the October meeting. **We need volunteers to bring items for all the spring 2009 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) **as far in advance as possible**. Please help if you can!

Saturday November 15. Work day at Peveto Woods, Johnsons Bayou. Our friends from the Baton Rouge Audubon Society are holding a work day at their Peveto Woods sanctuary to clean up after Hurricane Ike. Full details will be available later and will be posted on our website. The main effort will be the removal of debris from the woods and brush. The debris is not as bad as it was from Rita. This time, it is mostly small stuff except for a few exceptions and will mostly involve hand removal. The main thing to bring will be boots and gloves.

Peveto Woods is south of Highway 82, about 4.5 miles east of Johnsons Bayou High School. If eastbound on 82, turn right on Parish Road 528 (Gulf View Ave), and then left on Tarpon Springs Avenue (the second road on the left) and proceed to the end.

For more information, contact Dave Patton (wdpatton@cox.net).

Saturday November 22 – Field trip to West Jefferson County. This trip will explore west Jefferson County, just as the wintering birds should be arriving. The trip will likely find raptors, sparrows and Sandhill Cranes, and, depending on the presence or absence of water in the rice fields, waterfowl.

Meet at the intersection of FM365 and Johnson Road (on the "north/west" side of Johnson Road at that intersection). From the intersection of Interstate 10 and FM365 in Fannett, proceed along FM365 (towards Nome) for about six miles. Shortly after you cross over the second of two bridges (this one over Ground Bridge Gully) and emerge out of the woodlands, South China Road goes to the right (east then north) and immediately afterwards, on the left, is Johnson Road. There is a green sign for the G and A Turf Farm on Johnson Road at the intersection. Contact Steve Mayes sgmayes @hotmail.com, or call 409-722-5807 for further information.

Saturday December 6. Sabine Woods Work Day. We are tentatively planning a second work day at Sabine Woods. Please contact us or check our website before setting out for this work day. The woods were badly beaten by the storm surge from Hurricane Ike. Much was accomplished on the first work day on October 18 as described elsewhere in this issue.

We would like to work on repairing the back fences, perhaps doing additional cleaning up and tidying of the trails, and work on vine control. Tools that we might need for this would include perhaps one or at most two chainsaws, and probably small sledge hammers to further disassemble the boardwalk sections. We might again want to remove vegetative debris, and, if you have a wheelbarrow and shovel to put in your pick up truck, it is conceivable that this might be useful.

We will plan to start around 7:30 a.m., and will probably work until noon or later.

Please bring heavy duty work gloves and insect repellant, and whatever hand tools you may have – loppers, clippers etc. We have a few, but typically not enough for everybody. Rakes may be useful this time. We might need one or two chain sawsBring water or other liquid refreshments.

Thursday January 15. Membership Meeting. Speaker will be Jennifer Fleming, Texas Bluebird Society on Bluebirds.

Saturday January 17. Field Trip to West Harris County. Full details in next month's issue.

Thursday February 19. Membership Meeting. Speaker: Tucker Slack, Texas Parks and Wildlife, J. D. Murphree Wildlife Management Area on Bird Banding at Murphree Wildlife Management Area.

Christmas Counts

We are hopeful that we will be able to conduct the Sea Rim State Park Christmas Count on January 3, but it is still too early to know for sure whether we will be able to access enough of the count circle. Other count compilers are in a similar situation, although it seems likely that the Turkey Creek and Beech Creek will be practical. We will have more details in next month's 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.

Sabine Woods Work Day, October 18, 2008

With the much appreciated assistance of 29 volunteers, the first work day to begin the process of recovering Texas Ornithological Society's .Sabine Woods from the ravages of Hurricane Ike was held in weather that could not have been better: little wind, pleasant temperatures and decreasing humidity as the day progressed. Much of Sabine Woods is on an old beach ridge which is between five and eight feet above sea level, yet the woods were inundated on September 13, 2008 with six to eight feet of salt water in the storm surge of the hurricane.

Essentially all the man made structures in the woods were destroyed by the combination of wind and water. Boardwalk sections were broken apart, and some deposited in various places around the woods. Much of the former boardwalk is simply unaccounted for, and presumably in small pieces somewhere in the marsh north of the Woods. The picnic shelter is no more. Most, but not quite all, of the benches are gone to places unknown. Fortunately, there were no man made structures to the south of Sabine Woods, and only marsh grasses came into the woods from outside. The combination of the wind and salt water top killed all the underbrush, and caused the leaves that remained on the trees to turn brown. Many of the weaker trees in the Woods had been felled by the winds in Hurricane Rita (September 25, 2005) and additional tree losses were only moderate at most. Three large oaks were among the casualties. The ponds are filled with salt water. The fence along the highway is now in relatively poor shape; the fences on the other three sides are damaged, but appear repairable. The water system is still intact, but we have not been able to test it to see if there is any damage.

On the brighter side, almost all the trees have put out new green leaves, and some of the underbrush is beginning to show new growth. The Woods were completely brown when we were first able to check them a week or ten days after the storm. Now, they stand out as a green oasis. There was a good rain two days before the work day, and we need many more such rains to help wash the salt away, even though the rain did make the going a little muddy on the work day.

The immediate plan was and is to deal with all hazardous branches and trees, and clear the boardwalk sections, fallen branches and the remains of the picnic shelter to create a ground level trail system where the boardwalks used to be. On the work day, essentially all the old boardwalk sections were broken into pieces that can be moved without equipment. We considered attempting to salvage portions of the boardwalk for reuse as boardwalk, but the more we got into them, the clearer it became that is was not practical to save any large sections. Most were wedged in and between trees and many were badly buckled and otherwise damaged. Many were in locations where it would likely be impossible to bring in equipment without damage to trees. Boardwalks section are very heavy! So, we broke and cut the boardwalks into manageable sections and piled them out of the path of the trails. We will probably try to salvage some individual boards on a later work day, although it is very difficult and time consuming to do that without damaging the boards. We will have to move the sections out of the Woods. When we had finished, the trails were almost all cleared, save for three large trees that will need to be dealt with by professionals.

An area near the old picnic shelter that was previously mostly a dense thicket of chinaberry trees was opened up substantially by the storm. We knew that, long before TOS purchased the property, many items that constitute the detritus of modern society had been dumped there. Some items had nearly rusted out, but we had reasonable access for the first , and we removed them all, including old appliances. Chinaberry, an invasive import from Asia, is not a tree we want to encourage, and we will now be able to clear it out of this area.

We surveyed the Woods planning our next moves. We do need to have three large trees cut down and rendered safe. We are planning to pump the salt water out of the main pond. We will need to work on the back fence, in a combination of manual labor to remove

much marsh grass from the fence and experienced help in replacing some broken posts and righting sections that are currently leaning. Also, the fence was cut in one place to remove cattle, and there are a few breaks in the wire elsewhere. When practical, we will need to test the water system. We don't think we have city water service right now.

Even before the storm, we were planning how we will use the $10,000 grant from the Birding Classic grant. This is earmarked for additional trees and water outlets. Now, we will likely wait until winter 2009/10 (to allow rain to wash away the salt and allow nature to show us which trees will not recover from their salt water immersion) and determine later what should be the balance between extending the motte and replacing trees inside it.

Regrettably, until the remaining tree hazards are dealt with, the Woods will have to remain closed to all but the recovery efforts. TOS hopes that it will be possible to permit entry for birding in no more than a few weeks. Migrants and potential winter residents are already using the Woods again, and we are hopeful that there will be birds to see during Spring 2009 migration.

We know that there were many who wanted to help on the work day, but were unable because of the short notice of this first weekday. This was unavoidable as we struggled with safety issues. However, we are tentatively setting the next work day for Saturday December 6, 2008. We will confirm the date as soon as we are able. Priority tasks will probably be fence repair, more trail clearance and tidy up, and vine control in the extreme western section.

We sincerely thank those who participated in this first recovery work day: Andy Allen, Kitty and Jim Anding, Jim Armacost, Howard Davis, Nancy and Don Fisher, Lauri and John Haynes, Rose Ann and Harrison Jordan, Gary Kelley, Steve Kuritz, Steve Mayes, Karen McCormick, Wendy Mires, Sally and Chuck Moffet, Richard Orgeron, Danny and John Park, Sherrie Roden, Paula and Paul Shaw, Jenny Shuffield, Christine Sliva, Ron Weeks, Jana Whittle.

John A. Whittle

An Anytime, Anywhere Celebration of Nature in the City

Simple citizen-science project reaches urbanites of all ages.

Ithaca, N.Y. – Nature has the power to soothe and enthuse. More people are finding that out as they join the free, year-round "Celebrate Urban Birds!" citizen-science project from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. From schools, hospitals, and senior centers, to wellness programs, scout packs, and military bases, participants are reaping the benefits of a closer connection to the natural world and a new appreciation for city birds.

A girl in 4-H changed her mind about city birds after taking part in the project: "At first I didn't like urban birds," she said. "I thought of them as pests. Then I realized that they are just like me and other kids. We are ignored or people just see as us pests or don't see us at all...yet if you look a little deeper you can see that on the inside we are pretty unique and cool!"

People of all ages and backgrounds participate in Celebrate Urban Birds through gardening, cultural activities and citizen-science. For the citizen-science part of the project, participants watch city birds for 10 minutes, check off 15 target species of birds, and send the information through the mail or the Internet to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Once enough data are gathered, scientists hope to learn more about how birds survive in cities and how they use urban green spaces such as parks, rooftop gardens, and even potted plants on balconies for food, resting sites, and shelter.

Individuals can participate on their own or through public events organized by local groups. Celebrate Urban Birds has partnered with more than 2,000 organizations to hold special "birdy" events featuring the arts, science, gardening, or other ways to draw people into bird study and observation. While supplies last, everyone who signs up will receive a Celebrate Urban Birds kit in English and Spanish with two colorful urban birds posters, educational materials about birds and urban greening, a data form, and a packet of sunflower seeds to plant in pots and gardens. More than 60,000 free kits have been distributed.

After receiving his kit, one elementary school youngster with Down syndrome declared, "I will take these posters home and put them up on my wall forever because I'm going to be a scientist when I grow up!" Teachers find that the 10-minute bird observation can be done within a class period, and it reinforces math, reading, scientific, artistic, and team-building skills. One teacher noted, "Our group of middle school boys was impressed with being able to help with a project sponsored by a university."

Some groups go beyond a single event by greening their neighborhood – creating habitat for birds on balconies, rooftops, front stoops, or community spaces. Others are tapping into the arts, creating dances, drawings, murals, sculptures, puppet shows, and short films based on city birds. The Celebrate Urban Birds web site has lots of resources and suggestions about how to craft an event or project for libraries, nature centers, schools and youth groups, community gardens, home-school groups, or individuals.

Winners have been chosen for the project's first "Beautiful Birds in Urban Places" video and photo contest. Marian Mendez of Hialeah, Florida, captured first prize with her images of birds found in her back yard. She said, "I like to single out one bird and watch it for a while, trying to see the personality and mind behind it. And I'm out in the fresh air, getting sunshine and a new perspective on life." You can see Marian's photos and other great entries on the web site. Stay tuned for the next photo contest! Learn more about Celebrate Urban Birds and sign up at www.CelebrateUrbanBirds.org!

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a membership institution dedicated to interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds. Visit the Lab's web site at http://www.birds.cornell.edu

Bird Sightings – September 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: Certainly an abnormal month, with Hurricane Ike, which made landfall on September 13, forcing our observers to leave the area temporarily and displacing many of our local resident birds for varying periods. In the wake of Ike, Ruby-throated Hummingbird numbers increased dramatically to very high numbers, a phenomenon that was apparent in Rita also. Also included below is a Swainson's Warbler, a species rarely detected in the fall.

WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(4)
MALLARD	(28-28)	JEF-PI 9/28(2) SM
DUCK, Mottled	(28-28)	JEF-PI 9/28(7) SM
TEAL, Blue-winged	(27-28)	JEF 2 reps(65)
TEAL, Green-winged	(28-28)	JEF-PI 9/28(20) SM
PELICAN, Amer. White	(28-28)	JEF 1 rep(30)
PELICAN, Brown	(28-28)	JEF 9/28(1) SR
CORMORANT, Neotropic	(28-28)	JEF 9/28(5) SR; JEF-PI 9/28(30) SM
FRIGATEBIRD, Magnificent	(15-15)	NEW-TX87 9/15(1) HD
HERON, Great Blue	(28-28)	JEF 1 rep(1)
EGRET, Great	(27-28)	JEF 2 reps(23)
EGRET, Snowy	(28-28)	JEF 1 rep(12)
HERON, Little Blue	(27-28)	JEF 2 reps(11)
HERON, Tricolored	(28-28)	JEF 1 rep(2)
EGRET, Reddish	(7-7)	JEF 1 rep(4)
EGRET, Cattle	(27-28)	JEF 3 reps(597)
HERON, Green	(28-28)	JEF-PI 9/28(1) SM
IBIS, White	(27-28)	JEF 3 reps(137)
IBIS, Plegadis	(27-28)	JEF 2 reps(60)
SPOONBILL, Roseate	(27-28)	JEF 9/27(10) JAW; JEF-PI 9/28(25) SM
VULTURE, Turkey	(27-28)	JEF 3 reps(15)
OSPREY	(28-28)	JEF-PI 9/28(1) SM
KITE, White-tailed	(28-28)	JEF 1 rep(1)
KITE, Mississippi	(5-6)	JEF-BMT 9/5(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 9/6(1) RHJ
HARRIER, Northern	(25-25)	JEF-GROV 9/25(1) SR
HAWK, Cooper's	(4-4)	HAI-SILS 9/4(1) MG
ACCIPITER species	(16-16)	JEF-BMT 9/16(1) RHJ
HAWK, Red-shouldered	(4-30)	HAI 2 reps(2); JEF 7 reps(7)
KESTREL, American	(27-28)	JEF 2 reps(2)
MOORHEN, Common	(28-28)	JEF 1 rep(1)
PLOVER, Black-bellied	(7-28)	JEF 2 reps(30)
PLOVER, Semipalmated	(7-7)	JEF 1 rep(5)
KILLDEER	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(1)
STILT, Black-necked	(27-28)	JEF 2 reps(31)
AVOCET, American	(28-28)	JEF 1 rep(50)
YELLOWLEGS, Greater	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(30)
KNOT, Red	(28-28)	JEF-PI 9/28(1) SM
SANDPIPER, Semipalmated	(7-7)	JEF-PI 9/7(5) SM
SANDPIPER, Western	(7-28)	JEF 2 reps(35)
SANDPIPER, Peep	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(50)
SANDPIPER, Least	(7-28)	JEF 2 reps(30)
SANDPIPER, Baird's	(28-28)	JEF-PI 9/28(1) SM
SANDPIPER, Buff-breasted	(7-7)	JEF-PI 9/7(1) SM
DOWITCHER, Short-billed	(7-28)	JEF 2 reps(13)
DOWITCHER, Long-billed	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(31)
DOWITCHER species	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(30)
GULL, Laughing	(27-28)	JEF 3 reps(180)
TERN, Caspian	(28-28)	JEF 1 rep(5)
TERN, Forster's	(28-28)	JEF 2 reps(14)
TERN, Royal	(28-28)	JEF 2 reps(6)
SKIMMER, Black	(28-28)	JEF 1 rep(35)
PIGEON, Rock	(29-30)	HAI 2 reps(111)
COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian	(27-30)	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 1 rep(11)
DOVE, White-winged	(2-27)	JEF 9 reps(44)
DOVE, Mourning	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(51)
DOVE, Inca	(4-30)	HAI 2 reps(6)
ANI, Groove-billed	(27-27)	JEF-SW 9/27(2) GD
OWL, Great Horned	(7-22)	JEF-SW 9/7(1) SM; JEF-SW 9/22(1) SM
WILL'S-WIDOW, Chuck-	(7-7)	JEF-PI 9/7(1) SM; JEF-SW 9/7(1) SM
HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-thr.	(4-30)	HAI 4 reps(20); JEF 25 reps(1576)
WOODPECKER, Red-bellied	(4-30)	HAI 3 reps(7); JEF 1 rep(1)
WOODPECKER, Downy	(2-30)	JEF 17 reps(17)
FLICKER, Northern	(15-24)	JEF-BMT 9/15(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 9/24(1) RHJ
WOODPECKER, Pileated	(6-29)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 2 reps(2)
WOOD-PEWEE, Eastern	(7-27)	JEF 2 reps(2)
FLYCATCHER, Yellow-bellied	(27-27)	JEF-SW 9/27(1) SM
EMPIDONAX species	(7-7)	JEF 1 rep(5)
FLYCATCHER, Gt. Crested	(7-27)	JEF-SW 9/7(1) SM; JEF-SW 9/27(1) SM
KISKADEE, Great	(27-27)	JEF-SW 9/27(1) SM
FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tailed	(27-28)	JEF 2 reps(3)
SHRIKE, Loggerhead	(25-28)	JEF 3 reps(4)
VIREO, White-eyed	(29-29)	JEF 1 rep(1)
VIREO, Red-eyed	(7-27)	JEF 2 reps(3)
JAY, Blue	(4-28)	HAI 1 rep(6); JEF 3 reps(3)
CROW, American	(4-8)	HAI 2 reps(18)
SWALLOW, Tree	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(2)
SWALLOW, Cliff	(27-27)	JEF 9/27(10) JAW
SWALLOW, Barn	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(112)
SWALLOW species	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(1)
CHICKADEE, Carolina	(4-29)	HAI 2 reps(7); JEF 1 rep(1)
TITMOUSE, Tufted	(29-29)	HAI 1 rep(3)
WREN, Carolina	(4-28)	HAI 2 reps(5); JEF 1 rep(1)
GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray	(4-22)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 2 reps(6)
BLUEBIRD, Eastern	(6-29)	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 4 reps(6)
ROBIN, American	(24-24)	JEF-NEDR 9/24(2) JAW
CATBIRD, Gray	(22-28)	JEF-BMT 9/22(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 9/28(1) RHJ
MOCKINGBIRD, Northern	(24-30)	HAI 2 reps(11); JEF 2 reps(15)
THRASHER, Brown	(4-26)	HAI-SILS 9/4(1) MG; HAI-SILS 9/8(2) MG; JEF-BMT 9/22(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 9/25(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 9/26(1) RHJ
STARLING, European	(27-30)	HAI 1 rep(9); JEF 1 rep(90)
WARBLER, Nashville	(27-28)	JEF-SW 9/27(1) GD; JEF-BMT 9/28(1) RHJ
PARULA, Northern	(27-28)	JEF 2 reps(2)
WARBLER, Yellow	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(5)

WARBLER, Pine	(4-27)	JEF 4 reps(9)
WARBLER, Prairie	(7-7)	JEF-SW 9/7(1) SM
WARBLER, Palm	(28-28)	JEF-PI 9/28(1) SM
WARBLER, Black-and-white	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(1)
WARBLER, Swainson's	(7-7)	JEF-SW 9/7(1) SM
WARBLER, Kentucky	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(2)
WARBLER, Mourning	(7-7)	JEF-SW 9/7(1) SM
YELLOWTHROAT, Common	(28-28)	JEF 1 rep(4)
WARBLER, Hooded	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(6)
WARBLER, Canada	(7-7)	JEF-SW 9/7(1) SM
WARBLER, Canada	(7-7)	JEF 1 rep(1)
CHAT, Yellow-breasted	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(2)
SPARROW, Lark	(27-27)	JEF 9/27(1) JAW
CARDINAL, Northern	(8-30)	HAI 3 reps(30); JEF 2 reps(5)
BUNTING, Indigo	(28-28)	JEF-PI 9/28(2) SM
BLACKBIRD, Red-winged	(27-28)	JEF 2 reps(8)
GRACKLE, Common	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(122)
GRACKLE, Great-tailed	(27-28)	JEF 3 reps(46)
COWBIRD, Brown-headed	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(80)
ORIOLE, Orchard	(21-21)	HAI 1 rep(2)
ORIOLE, Baltimore	(7-7)	JEF-SW 9/7(1) SM
FINCH, House	(9-30)	HAI-SILS 9/29(2) MG;JEF-BMT 9/9(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 9/16(4) RHJ; JEF-BMT 9/17(3) RHJ; JEF-BMT 9/19(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 9/20(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 9/21(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 9/25(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 9/28(2) RHJ; JEF-BMT 9/30(5) RHJ
SPARROW, House	(27-27)	JEF 1 rep(4)
Number of Species		111
Number of Individuals		4413

County Abbreviations:
HAI — Hardin; JEF — Jefferson; NEW — Newton

Location Codes
BMT — Beaumont; GROV — Groves; NEDR — Nederland; PI — Pleasure Island, Port Arthur; SILS — Silsbee; SRSP — Sea Rim State Park; SW — Sabine Woods; TX87 — Texas 87 Pt. Arthur-Sabine Pass-Sea Rim SP

Observer Abbreviations
GD — Gerald Duhon; HD — Howard Davis; JAW — John Whittle; JJW — John and Jana Whittle; MG — Melanie Goetsell; RHJ — Rose Ann and Harrison Jordan; SM — Steve Mayes; SR — Sherrie Roden;

Project FeederWatch Benefits Birds and People

Ithaca, NY – More than 100 studies have shown that getting closer to nature reduces stress and promotes a feeling of well-being in children and adults. So, filling feeders and counting the birds that visit may be just what the doctor ordered! For more than 20 years, that's what participants in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch have been doing – benefitting themselves and the birds.

"It is a great winter time activity for the whole family," says Alaska FeederWatcher Nancy Darnell. "If you have children, they will come to love watching the birds. All of this is fun and a chance to contribute to scientific studies, too!"

The 2008-09 season of Project FeederWatch gets underway November 8 and runs through April 3. Participants count the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders each week and send the information to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Participants submitted more than 115,000 checklists during the 2007-08 FeederWatch season, documenting unusual bird sightings, winter movements, and shifting ranges – a treasure-trove of information that scientists use to monitor the health of the birds and of the environment.

"Being a FeederWatcher is easy and fun, and at the same time helps generate the world's largest database on feeder-bird populations," says project leader David Bonter. "We are grateful for the contributions our participants have made for the birds and are proud of the joy they say it brings to their busy lives. Since we started in 1987, more than 40,000 people have submitted observations, engaging with the wildlife beyond their windows."

Scientists learn something new from the data each year, too, whether it's about the movements of common backyard birds or unusual sightings of rarely-seen species. Highlights of the most recent season include the largest southward movement of Red-breasted Nuthatches in the history of the project-part of an expected influx of northern birds that fly farther south when their food supplies run short. Other northern species showing up in record numbers included Common Repolls and Pine Siskins. Among the rare birds reported was a Streak-backed Oriole in Loveland, Colorado – the state's first report of this bird, native to Mexico. A December nor'easter deposited a Dovekie in Newton, Massachusetts, the first time this North Atlantic seabird has ever been reported to Project FeederWatch.

Long-term data show some species increasing in number, such as the Lesser Goldfinch in the Southwest. Other populations continue a downward trend, such as the Evening Grosbeak throughout their range. Once one of the most common species seen at feeders in the northern half of the continent, the grosbeaks are declining for unknown reasons.

Beyond the benefits to birds and science, however, is the benefit to participants. "Nature is not merely an amenity; it is critical to healthy human development and functioning," says Nancy Wells, Cornell University assistant professor of design and environmental analysis. Her studies find that a view of nature through the window or access to the environment in any way improves a child's cognitive functioning and reduces the negative effects of stress on the child's psychological well-being. Wells also notes that when children spent time with nature early in life it carries over to their adult attitudes and behavior toward the environment.

Project FeederWatch welcomes participants of all ages and skill levels, from scout troops and retirees to classrooms and nature center visitors. To learn more and to sign up, visit www.feederwatch.org or call the Lab toll-free at (800) 843-2473. In return for the $15 fee ($12 for Lab members) participants receive the *FeederWatcher's Handbook*, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds in their area, a calendar, complete instructions, and the FeederWatch annual report, *Winter Bird Highlights*.

Many FeederWatchers echo this comment from Mary Strasser of Wisconsin: "The greatest reward for me as a participant in Project FeederWatch these many years has been observing birds and behavior that I might have missed had I not been part of this project."

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a membership institution dedicated to interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds. Visit the Lab's web site at http://www.birds.cornell.edu .

Birds Migrate Together at Night in Dispersed Flocks, New Study Indicates

Principal investigator Ronald Larkin and his colleagues used a Korean War-era low-power-density tracking radar to detect and record the discrete flight details of two birds at a time. "Wherever the bird flies, the radar points at it," he said. (Credit: Photo by L. Brian Stauffer)

Science Daily (July 7, 2008) — A new analysis indicates that birds don't fly alone when migrating at night. Some birds, at least, keep together on their migratory journeys, flying in tandem even when they are 200 meters or more apart.

The study, from researchers at the University of Illinois and the Illinois Natural History Survey, appears in Integrative and Comparative Biology in July. It is the first to confirm with statistical data what many ornithologists and observers had long suspected: Birds fly together in loose flocks during their nocturnal migration.

Researchers have spent decades trying to determine how birds migrate at night, when most bird migration occurs. But nighttime tracking of tiny flying objects a quarter mile to a half mile up is no easy task. They have used stationary light beams, radar-mounted tracking spot lamps and long-range radar to try to figure out what is going on in the night sky. Some have even watched birds cross the face of the moon.

Decades of such observations suggested that birds travel together at night, but not in compact flocks as they do during the day, said principal investigator Ronald Larkin, a professor of animal biology, who conducted the new study with Robert Szafoni. Larkin is a wildlife ecologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey, where Szafoni also worked as a research scientist. Sfazoni currently is an affiliate of the INHS.

Previous studies "sometimes very strongly suggested that the birds were flying tens of meters apart and yet somehow keeping together," Larkin said. But the evidence for this was "indirect and suggestive," he said.

Even if it could be established that the birds were flying in groups, Larkin said, no one knew whether they were simply being swept along together passively or whether they were actively, intentionally, traveling together.

In the new analysis, the researchers took a fresh look at bird-flight data Larkin had collected in the 1970s and '80s using low-power-density tracking radar. The radar directs microwaves in a narrow cone – a "pencil-beam" that can be pointed at virtually any target within range. "If there is a bird target here, you can see it on the radar display as an echo," Larkin said. "You throw a switch and it locks onto the target, it tracks the target, and wherever the bird flies, the radar points at it." The radar kept track of a target's distance (from the radar), altitude and direction of travel over time. It also provided data used to calculate the frequency of a target's wing beats. Since the radar could also track flying insects and other arthropods, the wing beat data would be important for distinguishing birds from bugs.

In collecting the data, Larkin, Szafoni and colleagues had used the radar in a new way. Once the radar operator had identified a flying object that might be a bird and began tracking its flight, he or she looked for other objects entering the radar's beam. If another potential target appeared, the radar could follow it for a few seconds before switching back to the first. By repeatedly switching back and forth between two targets, the operator could potentially detect the discrete flight details of two birds at a time.

Determining whether two birds were actively traveling together was tricky, Larkin said. "Even back in the 1970s it hit me that you can have two birds flying absolutely parallel in the same direction and at the same height, but they can be flying at such a different speed that one of them gains on the other and they're just, you know, automobiles passing on the expressway," he said. "They're simply taking the same route and not keeping together." Similarly, two animals may be going at similar speeds but at a slightly varying angle to one another. "After a while they would be kilometers apart," Larkin said. This would be clear evidence that the birds were not traveling together.

After analyzing dozens of trials, the researchers determined that a significant proportion of the pairs of birds they had tracked were flying at the same altitude, at the same speed and in the same direction. Some of these birds were quite far apart, more than 200 meters away from each other – a distance of nearly two football fields – and yet they were traveling together.

To determine whether the birds were just being swept passively along by prevailing winds or whether they were actively staying together, the researchers analyzed the flight patterns of insects and other arthropods occupying the same air space at the same time. These tiny creatures would be at the mercy of the wind and so would give the researchers a reliable picture of the pattern of air currents.

That analysis demonstrated that the birds were following their own course and were not simply being blown along by the wind. "To me, that's the marvelous thing – that they're flying in social groups in the middle of the night in the middle of the air, over territory most of them have never been over before," Larkin said.

Adapted from materials provided by University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Immediate Effects on Birds and their Locations after Hurricanes

Now that we have endured three hurricanes and a tropical storm in the space of three years, we in this region are perhaps in a unique position to report on what happens to birds in the aftermath of these events.

There were very few birds in Mid and South County when residents returned after the hurricanes. Slowly, the birds returned. Not all species came back at the same time. Where were the birds in the meantime? In the case of one species, Northern Mockingbirds, we have reports of up to triple the normal number in Silsbee. But where are the Red-winged Blackbirds that are normally present in the rice fields of west Jefferson County? The editor interested in hearing from anyone with observations relevant to these questions.

NATIONAL AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP FORM

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To join the National Audubon Society, please complete this form and return with Introductory Membership fee of $20 (payable to the National Audubon Society, or indicate you wish to be billed) to Golden Triangle Audubon Society, P. O. Box 1292, Nederland, TX 77627-1292. To use this form to give a membership as a gift, please complete the form and indicate your name in the appropriate space. Payment should accompany gift memberships.

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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/** Email alerts are also available for a small fee. Most rare bird sightings in Texas are posted on the TEXBIRDS listserv. The archives of this listserv are at **http://listserv.uh.edu/archives/texbirds.html** It is not necessary to subscribe to the listserv to view the archives, which include postings up to the most recent..

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**..

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