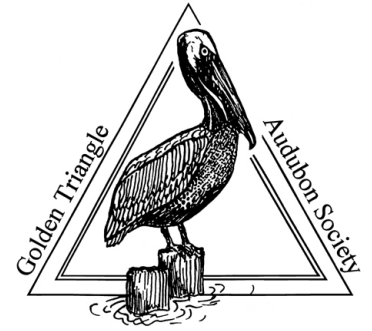


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 16 No. 2

February 2010

**Membership Meeting
Thursday, February 18, 2010
7:00 PM
Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont
Native Plants for Birds and Yards**

**Sharon Odegar
Beaumont Chapter
Native Plant Society of Texas**

Sharon has been a member of the Native Plant Society of Texas since 1990, has served as President, Secretary and Treasurer of the Beaumont Chapter, and has served on the State Nominating Committee. In 2000, she received the Benny J. Simpson Fellow of the Society award.

A member of the Beaumont Council of Garden Clubs since 1990, Sharon served as President of the Council from 2001 to 2003, and has been an active volunteer in weeding, hauling dirt, planting plants, working in office, engraving plant names, fund raising, and organizing home and garden tours. She has been a Master Gardener since 1997, active in Orange County, and is currently completing the Texas Master Naturalist course. She was one of the first volunteers at Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center, and helped to save original plants before construction began, worked in the propagation greenhouse, and helped identify native plants in the gardens.

Sharon has been a board member of Big Thicket Natural Heritage Trust since 2000, and currently is serving as Secretary.

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

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Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Web Site for more information
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

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Calendar of Events

February 12-15, 2010. 12th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation. Participants count birds and report their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. Anyone can take part, from novice bird watchers to experts, by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online at www.birdcount.org.

Thursday February 18, 2010.

Membership Meeting. See front page for details.

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank the Shaws, the Grabers, the Staffords and Sherrie Roden for bringing refreshments in January. Lynn Otto has volunteered to bring pulled pork sandwiches for the February meeting, and Lu Skillern has donated funds for a large Decadent Chocolate Cake from Barbara's Bon-Bon. **We will gladly accept volunteers to bring items for the remaining Spring 2010 meetings.** We do not expect one person to bring everything, but please call so we can coordinate! Even if you would like to 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 February 20, 2010. Field Trip to Sheldon Lake

Sheldon Lake State Park includes a large lake, which attracts many waterfowl, and well as moist wooded areas and newly restored prairie. The park entrance and Environmental Learning Center are at 15315 Beaumont

Highway (Business 90) at Park Road 138 just outside the northeast section of Houston. We will meet at 8:15 a.m. inside the park outside the Environmental Learning Center. Normal travel time from the Golden Triangle should be about one hour 30 minutes to one hour 40 minutes. It is about 85 miles from Beaumont, and a little further from mid and south county.

If you approach on US 90, in Crosby, take the Beaumont Highway (**Business 90**, not the "main" US 90) and proceed about 5 miles to the park entrance to the right. If you reach Beltway 8 you have gone too far.

If you prefer IH10, exit on Beltway 8 and turn north. After just under four miles cross under US 90. Go another half mile or so and turn right on Business 90 (Beaumont Highway) and proceed less than a mile to the park entrance on the left.

The park does not open until 8:00 a.m. The park telephone number is 281-456-2800.

Saturday March 13, 2010. Sabine Woods Work Day. Please mark your calendars now, as you may not receive the March issue before this date. We plan to get the trails ready for spring migration. We may want to add material to the trails in the low spots, and wheel barrows will be helpful. Also, we will probably need to mow around the newly planted tress, and although we hope to do larger areas with a brush hog, we will need push mowers to trim around the trees. We may need one chain saw also. We plan another Work Day on May 15.

Thursday March 18, 2010. Membership Meeting. Jena Moon of McFaddin NWR will present a program on tracking Mottled Duck movements using satellite capable transmitters.

Saturday March 20, 2010. Field Trip to Bolivar Flat. Full details in next month's issue. This trip will likely stop at High Island on the way home.

Thursday April 15, 2010. Membership Meeting, speaker Philip Barbour. Topic TBA.

Saturday April 17, 2010. Field Trip to Sabine Woods and Sabine Pass area. Full details in future issues.

Grady's Bench

There once was a tree. The tree was cut down to make into lumber. The lumber was sold to a man named Andy who had volunteered for Golden Triangle Audubon to build some benches to place in Sabine Woods, the TOS birding sanctuary in Sabine Pass. Two of the benches were being made to commemorate a man who had passed away the year before. His name was Grady. He volunteered more hours than almost any person at Anahuac Wildlife Refuge in Anahuac (over 8,000 hours), was also a volunteer EMS and fireman in Anahuac. He volunteered for Golden Triangle Audubon to help maintain Sabine Woods too. He would load up a riding lawnmower on a lowboy trailer very early in the morning on workdays. He would drive a very long way, 60 miles from Anahuac to Sabine Pass and mow grass, so that birders could easily walk trails every spring and fall. Grady was a person who did not have to be called to remind him to come to a workday. He was a willing and caring person, who was a very hard worker. I can remember sitting with him during the spring and watching lots of people walk the freshly cut trails as we talked about how he worked so hard the day before mowing that trail.

After he passed away, we missed him sorely and his sweet wife moved to Oklahoma. Andy carefully designed and built two nice benches with backs, and cemented the benches deep in the ground. There were engraved plates placed on the benches that said, "In loving memory of Grady Skillern." Many birders rested on those benches during the spring and fall when sometimes there could be a hundred people in the woods in one day. Every time they passed by, Grady's benches were there to help take a load off of their feet.

A year later, Hurricane Ike hit Sabine Pass. There was salt water that covered Sabine Woods 13 feet high and sat there for a long time. It was a devastating blow for the plant-life and trees at the woods. The boardwalks were totally destroyed, and of course Grady's benches were missing along with one of two of Bessie Cornelius's benches. The picnic shelter was totally washed away also and nothing was ever recovered.

Last June, nine months after the hurricane, Grady's wife, Lu, got a phone call. It was from a man in Beaumont who had seen Grady's missing bench. The man informed Lu that his neighbor had cleaned up debris that was on Hwy. 73 after Hurricane Ike. That means that the surge of water from Sea Rim Beach was so powerful during the hurricane that it had pulled up the bench that was cemented deep in the ground and carried it for over 13 miles! Such was the power of the storm surge mixed with sustained 80 mph winds with gusts up to 100mph. The Beaumont man, who was clearing off Hwy. 73 so that people could travel back to the hurricane ravaged area, had located a bench that looked in pretty good shape and so he brought it home to his house in Beaumont, put it in his front yard, where he and his wife sit on it in the evenings, and invite neighbors over to visit. The neighbors looked up Grady's name on the internet, and they found information about him volunteering at Anahuac. They discovered that he even has the Skillern Tract named after him there. When Lu found out about it, and she told them that it was always like Grady.

Many times Lu didn't know exactly where he was while he was volunteering, but he always came home for supper.

The Golden Triangle Audubon board decided that we would let the man in Beaumont keep the bench. We hope to eventually have another bench made, but as for now, we continue to maintain Sabine Woods for TOS, and are always rewarded with nice trails for everyone to bird especially in the spring and fall. We truly appreciate all of our volunteers that make birding a pleasure in Sabine Woods.

Jana Whittle

Sabine Woods Report

Thanks to a lot of hard work and time spent managing the projects by Gary Kelley, the various Sabine Woods projects have been completed. We wish to thank Gary most sincerely for all his efforts, which are very much appreciated.

With funding provided by a Hurricane Recovery Grant from the Sempra Energy Foundation to Golden Triangle Audubon, augmented by modest additional expenditures of our own funds, a new picnic shelter has been constructed using the slab of the previous one; and we have two new gates and associated fencing.

With funding from the 2008 Great Texas Birding Classic Conservation grant to Texas Ornithological Society for habitat improvement at the Woods, we have purchased 40 two- to three-inch trunk diameter live oak trees and a few hackberry trees. These are quite large trees, already 10 to 14 ft tall, and most have been planted along the ridge to extend the motte to the east. A few were planted inside the existing woods to provide follow on for when the existing live oaks, many of which are likely already well past their prime, decline. We have had the plumbing repaired and the system expanded to provide more hose outlets, so we can provide water to the new trees if that proves necessary during the first year or two of their new lives. (Right now, it doesn't look as if we will have to do anything in the near term, because there is water everywhere!)

Jim and Kitty Anding of College Station propagated a large number of mulberry trees from berries from the ones along Highway 87 just beyond Sea Rim. They were kind enough to donate well over 100 of these trees in one-gallon pots and bring them to Sabine Woods. On December 5, our volunteers, and a number of volunteers who took a break from repairing the United Methodist Church facilities in Sabine Pass to help us, planted these trees in record time. A few were also planted to replace the ones beyond Sea Rim that were killed in Hurricane Ike.

We have scheduled Work Days for March 13 and May 15, and we would like as much help as possible. We are investigating whether it is practical and acceptable to put some crushed rock like material on the low parts of the trails, and, if we do, we will need wheelbarrows. We also will need to mow around the new trees frequently for a year or two to prevent competition for water. Especially for the mulberry trees, this will have to be done with nothing more than push mowers.

Bird Sightings – December 2009

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 johnawhittle@aol.com or call (409) 880-8276. For "very rare" birds, or very much out-of-season species, 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: Our report for December is always anomalous in some ways. Many observers do a lot of their December birding during Christmas Counts, and many of the counts that take place in December are out of our immediate area. Two counts in our coverage

areas that this year were conducted in December were the two in the Big Thicket, in Hardin, Tyler and Jasper counties. These, especially Tyler and Jasper, are counties from which we normally receive few reports. We would love to have some coverage of these counties through the year, not merely during Christmas Count season. The two counts in the southern part of the Triangle were held in January this season, and will be included in next month's report.

Once again, we have eagles in west Jefferson County, including a possible Golden Eagle. We apparently have two Great Kiskadees in the south part of Jefferson County. We are again seeing a good variety of hummingbird species this winter. We never expected to use the abbreviated format for Buff-bellied Hummingbird but one in north Beaumont was seen almost every day in December! The experience in Louisiana has shown that maintaining feeders throughout the winter will, after perhaps a year of two, be rewarded by the attentions of wintering hummingbirds. It used to be thought that Rufous Hummingbirds were almost the only hummingbirds likely to be seen along the Gulf coast, but that is clearly not the case. One Harris's Sparrow was seen very briefly in Jefferson County, while we have two reports of Henslow's Sparrow.

GOOSE, Snow	(6-13)	JEF 3 reps(5095)	EAGLE, Bald	(6-22)	JAS 12/22(2) BE06; JEF 12/6(6) LH; TYL 12/22(4) BE05
GOOSE, Ross's	(13-13)	JEF 12/13(5) JAW	HARRIER, Northern	(3-28)	JAS 1 rep(1); JEF 9
DUCK, Wood	(19-22)	HAI 12/19(10) TC05; TYL 12/19(1) TC02; TYL 12/19(10) TC09; TYL 12/22(4) BE05			
GADWALL	(5-28)	JEF-SRSP 12/5(50)	HAWK, Sharp-shinned	(15-19)	HAI-SNDY 12/15(1) AM; HAI 12/19(1) TC05
		JAW; JEF 12/28(4) JAW	HAWK, Cooper's	(3-22)	JEF-BMT 12/3(1) RHJ; JEF-TX87 12/5(1) JAW; JEF-BMT 12/6(1) RHJ; JEF 12/20(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 12/20(1) JAW; JEF-BMT 12/22(1) RHJ
WIGEON, American	(5-5)	JEF-SRSP 12/5(1) JAW	HAWK, Red-shouldered	(3-29)	HAI 7 reps(8); JAS 3
MALLARD	(5-5)	JEF-TX87 12/5(2) JAW			reps(6); JEF 12 reps(16); TYL 5 reps(13)
DUCK, Mottled	(5-13)	JEF 2 reps(13)	HAWK, Red-tailed	(3-31)	HAI 5 reps(7); JAS 1
SHOVELER, Northern	(5-5)	JEF-SRSP 12/5(2) JAW			rep(3); JEF 9 reps(140); TYL 2 reps(2)
TEAL, Green-winged	(22-22)	TYL 12/22(1) BE05	HAWK, Red-tailed (Krider)	(13-13)	JEF-TX87 12/13(1) JAW
CANVASBACK	(22-22)	JAS 12/22(27) BE08; TYL 12/22(9) BE05; TYL 12/22(300) BE10	EAGLE, Golden (unconfirmed)	(6-6)	JEF 12/6(1) JAW
			CARACARA, Crested	(6-28)	JEF 12/6(2) JAW; JEF 12/20(2) JAW; JEF 12/28(1) JAW
MERGANSER, Hooded	(19-19)	HAI 12/19(1) TC07	KESTREL, American	(5-28)	HAI 3 reps(5); JAS 1
DUCK species	(20-20)	JEF 12/20(2) JAW			rep(1); JEF 7 reps(96); TYL 9 reps(16)
GREBE, Pied-billed	(6-28)	JAS 1 rep(9); JEF 4	MERLIN	(13-28)	JEF 12/13(3) JAW; JEF 12/20(1) JAW; JEF 12/28(1) JAW; TYL 12/22(1) BE05
		reps(5); TYL 3 reps(22)	FALCON, Peregrine	(20-20)	JEF 12/20(2) JAW
PELICAN, Amer White	(22-22)	JAS 12/22(90) BE08; TYL 12/22(23) BE05	MOORHEN, Common	(22-22)	JAS 12/22(2) BE08
PELICAN, Brown	(5-5)	JEF-TX87 12/5(6) JAW	COOT, American	(5-22)	JAS 1 rep(512); JEF 1
CORMORANT, Neotropic	(5-5)	JEF-TX87 12/5(2) JAW			rep(101); TYL 3 reps(578)
CORMORANT, Double-crested	(19-22)	HAI 1 rep(1); JAS 2	CRANE, Sandhill	(6-28)	JEF 12/6(302) JAW; JEF 12/13(205) JAW; JEF 12/20(14) JAW; JEF 12/28(182) JAW
		reps(204); TYL 2 reps(220)	PLOVER, Black-bellied	(5-5)	JEF-MCFW 12/5(2) JAW
ANHINGA	(5-22)	JAS 12/22(5) BE08; JEF-TX87 12/5(1) JAW; JEF 12/13(1) JAW; TYL 12/22(1) BE05	PLOVER, Piping	(5-5)	JEF-MCFW 12/5(2) JAW
HERON, Great Blue	(5-28)	HAI 4 reps(5); JAS 2	KILLDEER	(5-28)	HAI 2 reps(3); JAS 1
		reps(7); JEF 7 reps(26); TYL 5 reps(13)			rep(15); JEF 4 reps(53); TYL 5 reps(27)
EGRET, Great	(5-30)	HAI 4 reps(8); JAS 2	AVOCET, American	(5-5)	JEF-MCFW 12/5(2) JAW
		reps(39); JEF 9 reps(81); TYL 4 reps(33)	SANDPIPER, Spotted	(22-22)	JAS 12/22(1) BE07; TYL 12/22(1) BE10
EGRET, Snowy	(5-28)	JAS 2 reps(4); JEF 4	YELLOWLEGS, Greater	(13-28)	JEF 12/13(4) JAW; JEF-TX87 12/20(1) JAW; JEF 12/28(3) JAW; TYL 12/22(1) BE01
		reps(33); TYL 2 reps(5)	YELLOWLEGS, Lesser	(6-28)	JEF 12/6(20) JAW; JEF 12/20(25) JAW; JEF 12/28(50) JAW
HERON, Little Blue	(22-22)	TYL 12/22(1) BE10	SANDERLING	(5-5)	JEF-MCFW 12/5(6) JAW
EGRET, Cattle	(5-13)	JEF-SRSP 12/5(1) JAW; JEF 12/6(9) JAW; JEF 12/13(2) JAW	SANDPIPER, Least	(20-28)	JEF 12/20(2) JAW; JEF 12/28(1) JAW
IBIS, White	(6-22)	JEF 12/6(1) JAW; JEF 12/13(210) JAW; TYL 12/22(12) BE05; TYL 12/22(15) BE10	DUNLIN	(20-28)	JEF 12/20(200) JAW; JEF 12/28(50) JAW
IBIS, Plegadis	(6-20)	JEF 3 reps(7)	SANDPIPER, Stilt	(20-20)	JEF 12/20(3) JAW
VULTURE, Black	(13-22)	HAI 6 reps(38); JAS 2	DOWITCHER, Long-billed	(20-28)	JEF 12/20(40) JAW; JEF 12/28(50) JAW
		reps(6); JEF 2 reps(3); TYL 7 reps(68)			
VULTURE, Turkey	(5-31)	HAI 6 reps(57); JAS 3			
		reps(30); JEF 5 reps(36); TYL 9 reps(140)			
OSPREY	(5-22)	JEF-MCFW 12/5(1) JAW; TYL 12/19(1) TC10; TYL 12/22(1) BE05			
KITE, White-tailed	(5-28)	JEF 12/5(1) JAW; JEF-MCFW 12/5(1) JAW; JEF 12/28(1) JAW			

DOWITCHER species	(20-20)	JEF 12/20(20) JAW	12/14(5) JAW; JEF 12/20(14) JAW; JEF 12/28(4) JAW; TYL 12/22(12) BE05
SNIFE, Wilson's	(13-22)	JAS 12/22(25) BE06; JEF 12/13(2) JAW; TYL 12/22(3) BE10	
WOODCOCK, American	(19-19)	HAIBTTC 12/19(1) TC04	
GULL, Laughing	(6-13)	JEF 2 reps(7)	
GULL, Ring-billed	(22-22)	TYL 12/22(20) BE10	
TERN, Forster's	(5-28)	JEF-TX87 12/5(20) JAW; JEF 12/28(1) JAW; TYL 12/22(6) BE05; TYL 12/22(30) BE10	
PIGEON, Rock	(6-28)	JEF 4 reps(35)	
COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian	(6-22)	HAISNDY 12/15(1) AM; JEF 12/6(13) JAW; JEF 12/13(37) JAW; TYL 12/22(13) BE10	
DOVE, White-winged	(8-13)	HAISILS 12/8(1) MG; HAISILS 12/13(2) MG; JEF-NEDR 12/13(26) JAW	
DOVE, Mourning	(5-30)	HAI 12 reps(89); JAS 1 rep(8); JEF 5 reps(296); TYL 7 reps(62)	
DOVE, Inca	(19-19)	TYL 12/19(10) TC02	
OWL, Barn	(5-5)	JEF-SW 12/5(3) JAW	
SCREECH-OWL, Eastern	(22-22)	JAS 12/22(1) BE08	
OWL, Barred	(15-22)	HAISNDY 12/15(1) AM; JAS 12/22(2) BE07; TYL 12/19(1) TC02	
HUMMINGBIRD, Buff-bellied	(1-31)	JEF 27 reps(27) at same location almost every day	
HUMMINGBIRD, Black-chinned	(25-28)	JEF-NEDR 12/25(1) JJW; JEF-NEDR 12/26(1) JJW; JEF-NEDR 12/28(1) JAW	
HUMMINGBIRD, Calliope	(11-28)	JEF-NEDR 12/11(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 12/16(1) JJW; JEF-NEDR 12/20(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 12/21(1) JJW; JEF-NEDR 12/23(1) JJW; JEF-NEDR 12/25(1) JJW; JEF-NEDR 12/26(1) JJW; JEF-NEDR 12/28(1) JAW	
HUMMINGBIRD, Broad-tailed	(1-31)	JEF-BMT 12/1(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 12/9(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 12/28(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 12/30(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 12/31(1) RHJ	
HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous	(8-28)	JEF-BMT 12/8(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 12/13(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 12/14(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 12/15(1) RHJ; JEF 12/16(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 12/17(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 12/19(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 12/20(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 12/21(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 12/24(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 12/28(1) RHJ	
HUMMINGBIRD species	(1-31)	JEF 26 reps(29)	
KINGFISHER, Belted	(5-28)	HAI 3 reps(5); JAS 2 reps(7); JEF 6 reps(12); TYL 3 reps(8)	
WOODPECKER, Red-headed	(15-22)	HAISNDY 12/15(4) AM; TYL 12/22(1) BE01; TYL 12/22(2) BE05; TYL 12/22(9) BE10	
WOODPECKER, Red-bellied	(5-30)	HAI 17 reps(59); JAS 3 reps(22); JEF 3 reps(3); TYL 9 reps(85)	
SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied	(5-22)	HAI 4 reps(19); JAS 1 rep(6); JEF 1 rep(1); TYL 7 reps(44)	
WOODPECKER, Downy	(5-31)	HAI 5 reps(19); JAS 2 reps(4); JEF 4 reps(4); TYL 6 reps(25)	
WOODPECKER, Hairy	(19-19)	HAIBTTC 12/19(1) TC04; TYL 12/19(2) TC01; TYL 12/19(1) TC10	
FLICKER, Northern	(5-31)	HAI 7 reps(16); JAS 1 rep(1); TYL 4 reps(9)	
WOODPECKER, Pileated	(5-31)	HAI 8 reps(12); JAS 3 reps(7); TYL 6 reps(23)	
PHOEBE, Eastern	(5-30)	HAI 12 reps(32); JAS 3 reps(12); JEF 5 reps(66); TYL 9 reps(45)	
FLYCATCHER, Vermilion	(6-28)	JEF 12/6(2) JAW; JEF 12/13(2) JAW; JEF 12/20(1) JAW; JEF 12/28(1) JAW	
KISKADEE, Great	(5-5)	JEF-SW 12/5(2) JAW	
SHRIKE, Loggerhead	(5-28)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 5 reps(64)	
VIREO, White-eyed	(19-22)	HAI 12/19(1) TC14; TYL 12/19(1) TC01; TYL 12/22(1) BE05	
VIREO, Blue-headed	(19-22)	HAI 3 reps(5); TYL 5 reps(9)	
JAY, Blue	(5-22)	HAI 4 reps(18); JAS 2 reps(23); JEF 2 reps(6); TYL 9 reps(66)	
CROW, American	(15-28)	HAI 4 reps(85); JAS 3 reps(103); JEF 2 reps(6); TYL 9 reps(219)	
CROW, Fish	(15-15)	HAISNDY 12/15(1) AM	
CROW, species	(13-13)	JEF 12/13(2) JAW	
SWALLOW, Tree	(6-28)	JAS 12/22(13) BE08; JEF 12/6(7) JAW; JEF-TX87 12/13(2) JAW; JEF-BMT	
CHICKADEE, Carolina	(4-28)	HAI 15 reps(80); JAS 3 reps(26); JEF 1 rep(2); TYL 9 reps(109)	
TITMOUSE, Tufted	(4-30)	HAI 13 reps(35); JAS 2 reps(7); TYL 7 reps(49)	
NUTHATCH, Red-breasted	(15-15)	HAISNDY 12/15(1) AM	
NUTHATCH, Brown-headed	(15-22)	HAISNDY 12/15(8) AM; HAI 12/19(2) TC07; HAI 12/19(3) TC14; JAS 12/22(4) BE08; TYL 12/19(2) TC01; TYL 12/19(8) TC10; TYL 12/22(1) BE05	
CREEPER, Brown	(15-22)	HAISNDY 12/15(1) AM; HAI 12/19(1) TC05; TYL 12/19(1) TC02; TYL 12/22(1) BE01; TYL 12/22(1) BE05; TYL 12/22(1) BE10	
WREN, Carolina	(4-31)	HAI 14 reps(28); JAS 2 reps(12); TYL 8 reps(40)	
WREN, House	(15-22)	HAI 2 reps(10); TYL 6 reps(37)	
WREN, Winter	(15-22)	HAISNDY 12/15(1) AM; JAS 12/22(5) BE08; TYL 12/19(4) TC02; TYL 12/22(1) BE10	
WREN, Sedge	(19-19)	TYL 12/19(1) TC02	
KINGLET, Golden-crowned	(5-22)	HAISNDY 12/15(4) AM; HAIBTTC 12/19(1) TC04; JEF-SW 12/5(3) JAW; TYL 12/19(4) TC01; TYL 12/22(16) BE05; TYL 12/22(7) BE10	
KINGLET, Ruby-crowned	(5-31)	HAI 19 reps(91); JAS 2 reps(47); JEF 5 reps(54); TYL 9 reps(105)	
GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray	(5-28)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 4 reps(23); TYL 2 reps(13)	
BLUEBIRD, Eastern	(6-28)	HAI 12 reps(90); JAS 3 reps(14); JEF 6 reps(40); TYL 9 reps(304)	
THRUSH, Hermit	(15-22)	HAISNDY 12/15(1) AM; HAI 12/19(2) TC05; HAIBTTC 12/19(6) TC04; TYL 12/19(1) TC01; TYL 12/19(1) TC09; TYL 12/22(1) BE05; TYL 12/22(1) BE10	
ROBIN, American	(6-25)	HAI 7 reps(459); JAS 3 reps(606); JEF 1 rep(3); TYL 9 reps(1515)	
CATBIRD, Gray	(5-22)	HAISNDY 12/15(1) AM; HAI 12/19(2) TC05; HAISILS 12/20(1) MG; JAS 12/22(1) BE08; JEF-SW 12/5(2) JAW; TYL 12/19(3) TC01; TYL 12/19(1) TC02; TYL 12/22(1) BE03; TYL 12/22(1) BE05	
MOCKINGBIRD, Northern	(5-28)	HAI 5 reps(15); JAS 3 reps(4); JEF 5 reps(34); TYL 8 reps(26)	
THRASHER, Brown	(6-31)	HAI 3 reps(3); JAS 2 reps(2); JEF 1 rep(1); TYL 1 rep(1)	
STARLING, European	(5-28)	JAS 1 rep(6); JEF 5 reps(261); TYL 2 reps(3)	
PIPIT, American	(6-28)	HAI 1 rep(3); JEF 4 reps(17)	
WAXWING, Cedar	(5-22)	HAI 5 reps(199); JAS 2 reps(29); JEF 3 reps(43); TYL 8 reps(298)	
WARBLER, Orange-crowned	(1-31)	HAI 3 reps(21); JEF 19 reps(22); TYL 5 reps(15)	
WARBLER, Yellow-rumped	(5-22)	HAI 8 reps(96); JAS 3 reps(45); JEF 5 reps(20); TYL 9 reps(301)	
WARBLER, Pine	(4-31)	HAI 24 reps(109); JAS 3 reps(48); JEF 8 reps(10); TYL 9 reps(118)	
YELLOWTHROAT, Common	(5-22)	JEF-SW 12/5(3) JAW; TYL 12/22(1) BE05; TYL 12/22(2) BE10	
TOWHEE, Eastern	(15-19)	HAISNDY 12/15(1) AM; TYL 12/19(1) TC01	
TOWHEE, Eastern/Spotted	(5-5)	JEF-SW 12/5(1) JAW	
SPARROW, Chipping	(1-31)	HAI 24 reps(947); JAS 2 reps(32); JEF 4 reps(14); TYL 9 reps(467)	
SPARROW, Field	(15-19)	HAISNDY 12/15(11) AM; TYL 12/19(1) TC01; TYL 12/19(1) TC10	
SPARROW, Vesper	(6-15)	HAISNDY 12/15(11) AM; JEF 12/6(1) JAW	
SPARROW, Savannah	(5-28)	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 5 reps(96); TYL 1 rep(1)	
SPARROW, Henslow's	(15-19)	HAISNDY 12/15(1) AM; TYL 12/19(1) TC10	
SPARROW, Fox	(15-15)	HAISNDY 12/15(1) AM	
SPARROW, Song	(5-28)	HAI 2 reps(11); JEF 5 reps(6); TYL 4 reps(18)	

(continued on page 7)

Field Trip to West Harris County – January 23, 2010

It's impossible to say if it's the timing or the place but the annual January field trip to the Katy Prairie of western Harris and eastern Waller counties has been plagued by difficult weather conditions. Freezing cold, rain and wind have often been the hallmarks of trip day though, usually, conditions have let up enough to allow plenty of good birding. Once again, rain and wind threatened to put a damper to the 2010 installment of this tradition but a van load of Golden Triangle birders braved the trip anyway!

Arriving at the Randall's grocery store in northwest Houston in the early morning, the weather was gray but not unpleasant. These would prove to be the conditions for most of the day (though the wind was a little rough at times). Regardless of the weather, birds were immediately obvious. Sure there were the typical "parking lot" birds of southeast Texas like House Sparrows, White-winged Doves and European Starlings around. But how about Loggerhead Shrike? Flocks of overflying Northern Pintail? Lots of squealing Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks? The group had all of these while taking a coffee break in front of the Randall's. Not a bad start to the day.

The first true birding destination of the day was Bear Creek Park. Always a good birding option, this wooded park has been a reliable spot for such hard to find species as Vermilion Flycatcher and Rusty Blackbird over the years. Both of those species would prove elusive on this day but others were more cooperative. Carolina Chickadees and Tufted Titmice were vocal and obvious while Carolina Wren was vocal but cryptic. Eastern Bluebirds put in a decent showing (and they are always nice to see) and the high pitched voices of Cedar Waxwings were heard often. Both Blue-headed and White-eyed Vireos were spotted by the birders while Golden-crowned Kinglets were only heard. Woodpeckers put on a great show in the park. Red-bellied Woodpeckers were common and cooperative along with the smaller Downy Woodpeckers. A few Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were glimpsed including a stunning adult male bird. A couple of huge Pileated Woodpeckers were impressive and much appreciated by the assembled group while Northern Flicker remained only a distant voice. The real show stoppers were the Red-headed Woodpeckers. This park always seems to be a good place to get a look at one or two but on this date, this spectacular species seemed to be everywhere! Adults birds with brilliant scarlet heads and contrasting black and white bodies gave close up views to all along with charcoal headed young birds. Any birding trip with multiple Red-headed Woodpeckers must be considered a success! Cap it off with a beautiful and cooperative adult male Merlin and the group could have ended the trip right there!

But there is always more to see and unfortunately, it's not always good. Development is inevitable but unfortunately it is costing the birding world many nice spots in the Katy Prairie area. Longenbaugh Road has long been a birding staple in the area but brush clearing and changing land uses made it a bit disappointing this year. Where hedges once hid Harris's Sparrow and even Pyrrhuloxia, open lawns now held only blackbirds. The flooded fields that once held thousands of Northern Pintail, American Wigeon and other ducks now

stand weedy and dry. Without these species, the Bald Eagles that were once a near constant presence along this road were absent. But all is not lost, habitat remains here even if some has changed. Along what once were wetlands, the birders got great looks at a reclusive grassland species, the Grasshopper Sparrow. With a bright orange patch in front of the eye and purplish streaks on its gray neck the subtle beauty of this little sparrow could easily have been overlooked if it had not been so cooperative. Even with changes Longenbaugh Road still comes through!

Raptors are always a focus of this trip and there were plenty around. American Kestrels hunted from power line perches while Northern Harriers cruised low over the fields. Multiple views were had of Crested Caracaras, both flying and perched. These strange but attractive raptors are closely related to the active hunting falcons but behave more like the carrion eating vultures. This species has expanded its range in the last decade or so coming up from south Texas to now become reasonably common over much of the Texas coast. Red-tailed Hawks are always common in Texas in winter and come in a bewildering array of plumages. Many of these variations were seen on this trip. From the typical "Eastern" types with their strong belly bands on otherwise white undersides to the extremely pale "Kriders" type, all were well seen by the group. One particular bird was a rare treat for some of the birders. It was a "Rufous" morph Red-tailed Hawk which is something of an intermediate between the pale morph and dark morph birds with a goodly amount of rust coloration on the undersides. It was an attractive bird that all wished had stuck around a little longer.

But the Katy Prairie still had more nice finds waiting for the group. Flocks of Brewer's Blackbirds mixed with Brown-headed Cowbirds in a number of pastures and fields. A set of bare fields in Waller County held, not only flocks of Savannah and Vesper Sparrows, but also a platoon of foraging Long-billed Curlews. A flock of passing Sandhill Cranes is always appreciated and the same was true for the ones seen on this day. Warren Lake, though not holding as many birds as usual, still provided many Ruddy and Ring-necked Ducks to gaze at while the vegetation and feeders across the road provided Field Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow and Inca Dove. One of the final highlights of the day was a fine male Eastern Towhee that gave obstructed (but good) views of itself in a thicket along Old Washington Road.

The trip ended with a wrap up meal at "Los Cucos" Mexican Restaurant and recounting of this and past trips to the Katy Prairie. Surprises are still to be found in this great area and even if it is threatened by development, it still has much great birding to offer. A fine organization called the Katy Prairie Conservancy has done much to preserve the character and the bird-life of this special region and deserves all the support it can get. Hopefully, the Katy Prairie will continue to support spectacular birds (and birding trips) for many years to come – bad weather and all!

The following species were recorded on the trip: Black-bellied Whistling-Duck(71), Greater White-fronted Goose(11), Snow Goose(87), Ross's Goose(4), Gadwall(2), Mottled Duck(4), Blue-winged Teal(19), Northern

Shoveler(21), Northern Pintail(131), Ring-necked Duck(10), Ruddy Duck(250), Pied-billed Grebe(9), Double-crested Cormorant(14), Cormorant sp.(3), Great Blue Heron(5), Great Egret(6), Snowy Egret(1), Cattle Egret(6), Plegadis sp. Ibis(60), Black Vulture(47), Turkey Vulture(73), Northern harrier(6), Red-shouldered Hawk(2), Red-tailed Hawk(1), Red-tailed Hawk (Rufous morph)(1), Crested Caracara(4), American Kestrel(5), Merlin(1), Sandhill Crane(31), Killdeer(40), Yellowlegs sp.(1), Long-billed Curlew(26), Ring-billed Gull(1), Rock Pigeon(24), Eurasian Collared-Dove(2), White-winged Dove(123), Mourning Dove(45), Inca Dove(5), Belted Kingfisher(3), Red-headed Woodpecker(7), Red-bellied Woodpecker(9), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker(9), Downy Woodpecker(10), Northern Flicker(1), Pileated Woodpecker(2), Eastern Phoebe(9), Loggerhead Shrike(15), White-eyed Vireo(1), Blue-headed Vireo(2), Blue Jay(8), American Crow(9), Carolina Chickadee(30), Tufted Titmouse(10), Carolina Wren(3), Golden-crowned Kinglet(4), Ruby-crowned Kinglet(6), Eastern Bluebird(12), American Robin(34), Gray Catbird(1), Northern Mockingbird(15), European Starling(43), American Pipit(6), Cedar Waxwing(10), Orange-crowned Warbler(2), Yellow-rumped Warbler(17), Pine Warbler(15), Chipping Sparrow(20), Field Sparrow(5), Vesper Sparrow(5), Savannah Sparrow(29), Grasshopper Sparrow(1), White-throated Sparrow(1), White-crowned Sparrow(7), Northern Cardinal(7), Red-winged Blackbird(22), Eastern Meadowlark(1), Western Meadowlark(1), Meadowlark sp.(10), Brewer's Blackbird(1033), Common Grackle(2), Great-tailed Grackle(200), Brown-headed Cowbird(121), American Goldfinch(65), House Sparrow(72).

Steve Mayes

Bird Sightings (continued from page 5)

SPARROW, Lincoln's (5-19) HAI 12/19(5) TC05; JEF-SW 12/5(2) JAW; TYL 12/19(2) TC10
SPARROW, Swamp (5-22) HAI 1 rep(10); JEF 2 reps(4); TYL 2 reps(7)
SPARROW, White-throated (2-31) HAI 3 reps(149); JAS 1 rep(4); JEF 17 reps(28); TYL 6 reps(100)
SPARROW, Harris's (6-6) JEF 12/6(1) JAW
SPARROW, White-crowned (6-13) JEF 12/6(1) LH; JEF 12/13(4) JAW
JUNCO, Dark-eyed (5-22) HAI 12/19(30) TC04; HAI 12/19(6) TC05; HAI 12/19(1) TC14; JAS 12/22(7) BE08; JEF-SRSP 12/5(1) JAW; JEF-BMT 12/8(1) RHJ; JEF 12/16(1) RHJ; JEF-BMT 12/17(1) RHJ; TYL 12/19(5) TC02; TYL 12/22(12) BE01; TYL 12/22(2) BE05; TYL 12/22(8) BE10
CARDINAL, Northern (4-31) HAI 20 reps(227); JAS 3 reps(57); JEF 3 reps(6); TYL 9 reps(132)
BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (5-28) HAI 3 reps(36); JAS 1 rep(258); JEF 5 reps(4649); TYL 4 reps(922)
MEADOWLARK, Eastern (6-28) HAI 1 rep(4); JAS 1 rep(6); JEF 3 reps(10); TYL 2 reps(11)
MEADOWLARK species (5-28) JEF 5 reps(37)
BLACKBIRD, Brewer's (6-20) JEF 12/6(20) JAW; JEF 12/13(45) JAW; JEF 12/20(2) JAW
GRACKLE, Common (5-22) JAS 12/22(48) BE08; JEF-SW 12/5(30) JAW; JEF 12/13(310) JAW
GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (5-13) JEF 2 reps(61)
GRACKLE, Great-tailed (5-28) JEF 5 reps(388)
COWBIRD, Brown-headed (6-22) JAS 1 rep(40); JEF 3 reps(11450)
BLACKBIRD species (6-20) JEF 2 reps(260)
FINCH, House (5-29) JEF 8 reps(16)

GOLDFINCH, American (6-31) HAI 5 reps(187); JEF 8 reps(20); TYL 8 reps(300)
SPARROW, House (13-22) JEF 2 reps(6); TYL 1 rep(2)

Number of Species 141
Number of Individuals 78328

County Abbreviations:

HAI—Hardin; JAS—Jasper; JEF—Jefferson; TYL—Tyler

Location Codes

BMT—Beaumont; BTTC—Big Thicket NP - Turkey Creek Unit; MCFW—McFaddin NWR; NEDR—Nederland; SILS—Silsbee; SNDY—Nature Conservancy Sandyland Sanctuary; SRSP—Sea Rim State Park; SW—Sabine Woods; TX87—Texas 87 Pt. Arthur-Sabine Pass-Sea Rim SP

Observer Abbreviations

AM—Art Mackinnon; BE01—Beech Creek CBC Area 1; BE03—Beech Creek CBC Area 3; BE04—Beech Creek CBC Area 4; BE05—Beech Creek CBC Area 5; BE06—Beech Creek CBC Area 6; BE07—Beech Creek CBC Area 7; BE08—Beech Creek CBC Area 8; BE10—Beech Creek CBC Area 10; JAW—John Whittle; JJW—John and Jana Whittle; LH—Levie Horton; MG—Melanie Goetsell; MW—Steve Mayes and John Whittle; RHJ—Rose Ann and Harrison Jordan; TC01—Turkey Creek CBC Area 1; TC02—Turkey Creek CBC Area 2; TC04—Turkey Creek CBC Area 4; TC05—Turkey Creek CBC Area 5; TC07—Turkey Creek CBC Area 7; TC09—Turkey Creek CBC Area 9; TC10—Turkey Creek CBC Area 10; TC14—Turkey Creek CBC Area 14;

Corrections to Sea Rim CBC Bird List in January Issue

We regret that in the haste to get the Sea Rim Count Report into the January issue, several data entry errors occurred. The most important of these are that there were no Eastern Wood-Pewees or Sandhill Cranes seen.

Other corrections are: add two Great Blue Herons, delete one Snowy Egret, add one Osprey, add one Red-shouldered Hawk, add two American Kestrels, add two Black-bellied Plover, delete one Downy Woodpecker, add ten Eastern Phoebes, add two Eastern Meadowlark, add 10 Boat-tailed Grackles, delete 10 Great-tailed Grackle. The report on the Golden Triangle Audubon web-site has been corrected.

Other Area Christmas Count Reports

Unfortunately, there is no space in this issue to print reports from other area Christmas Counts. Compilers of these other counts have been kind enough to make full reports available to us. Rather than wait until next month, and then probably be able only to include a short summary, we have posted these reports on our web site at www.golentriangleaudubon.org.



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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. Archives of the listserv are at <http://lists.texbirds.org/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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