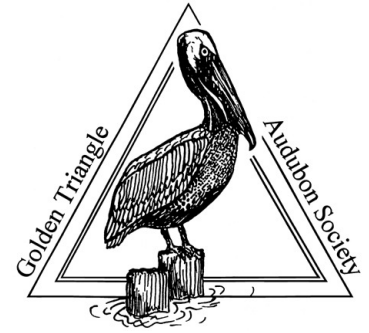


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 19 No. 9

September 2013

**Membership Meeting
Thursday September 19, 2013 7:00 p.m.
Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont**

**Bird Diversity from our Gulf Coast
to the Rocky Mountains of New Mexico**

**Sherrie Roden, Christine Sliva,
Harlan Stewart and Jana Whittle**

During the month of July 2013, four members of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society; Sherrie Roden, Christine Sliva, Harlan Stewart, and Jana Whittle, went on a 3,000 mile road trip from Southeast Texas to Red River, New Mexico. One of the main objectives of the trip was to visit and bird with Terry Ferguson, a close friend and a Golden Triangle Audubon member who now lives in Red River, NM. Red River is at an elevation of about 8,700 feet in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, 20 miles south of the Colorado state line as the eagle flies, and in a much under-birded area of New Mexico. Their presentation will showcase about 70 of the 197 bird species that were seen while traveling from Southeast Texas to Red River, NM, and back home to the Golden Triangle in nine days.

Sherrie is a retired Port Arthur ISD high school teacher. Christine lives and works in Southeast Texas. Harlan is a retired pathologist and is the person who took 2,500 photos and also put the program on Powerpoint. Jana is a retired Nederland ISD elementary school teacher. Terry is a retired elementary school teacher.

We will plan on having the doors open by 6:00 p.m. and the program will start at 7:00 p.m. sharp. A light supper will be available from 6:15 p.m.

The Brown Pelican

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Issue number 199

Golden Triangle
Audubon Society

Web Site for more information
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

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Calendar of Events

Important Note: Field Trip notices published here should always be regarded as needing confirmation just before the date. We want to be able to take advantage of any good concentrations of interesting birds and to adjust in cases where access has changed. Changes will always be posted on the web site at www.goldentriangleaudubon.org. Confirmation of the location will also normally be available at the Membership Meeting that is usually, but not always, two days prior to each trip, or by contacting Field Trip Committee chair, Steve Mayes at 409-722-5807 or sgmayes@hotmail.com

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank all those who brought or contributed for refreshments in May. Jean Beavins, Bob Collier, Frank Giglio, Harrison Jordan, Denise and Gary Kelley, Steve Mayes, Sherrie Roden, Phil Rogers, Mary and Herb Stafford **We need volunteers to bring items for the remaining fall 2013 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! Reserve the month you would like to help in now. Even if you can just bring drinks and cookies or something similar, please call Jana Whittle (409-722-4193 or email janafw@aol.com) **as far in advance as possible.** Please help if you can! We thank all those who brought refreshments over the last year or so!

Thursday September 19. Membership Meeting. See page 1 for details.

Saturday September 21. Jefferson County Fall Migration Count. Contact John Whittle (johnawhittle@aol.com or 409-722-4193) to volunteer to help in this county-wide count. In this count, we survey as much of the county as we are able, and all are welcome to help, even if you can only spend a few hours in the morning. We survey in town as well as in the more

rural areas, and can accommodate feeder watchers too.

Saturday September 28. Field Trip to the Smith Point Hawk Watch. Our leaders will be there from about 8:30 a.m. The peak of Broad-winged Hawk migration is "ordinarily" September 25 or 26, but highly dependent on weather conditions on the hawks' migratory route, and never seems to occur early. The hawks tend to wait out adverse weather conditions. This trip will be one week later than our normal field trip schedule.

To reach the Smith Point Hawk Watch site from Winnie, take Highway 124 south towards High Island. After 12 miles, turn right on FM1985 and follow it about 14 miles (two miles past the access road for Anahuac NWR) until it meets FM562. Follow FM562 (south) another 14 miles to Smith Point. At the end of FM562, there are usually signs to the Hawk Watch. Continue straight until almost reaching the bay, and turn left past the oilfield equipment, bearing left again to the parking area next to the Hawk Watch tower on the Candy Abshier Wildlife Management Area. It takes at least 90 minutes from the Golden Triangle to reach the site. This Field Trip is much more a come and go as you wish trip, and help on hawk identification is always available on the tower!

Our leaders may lead a group into the nearby woods looking for migrants, but you may stay on the tower if you wish. Mosquitoes are not normally a problem on the tower, although they almost always are in the woods. Food and fuel are limited or not available at Smith Point, so bring drinks and lunch!

If you cannot join us on this day, the Hawk Watch is conducted every day through the end of October.



EarthShare of Texas represents Audubon Foundation of Texas and the National Audubon Society in payroll contribution programs in workplaces throughout Texas. For more information about how you can support Audubon Foundation of Texas and the National Audubon Society at your workplace, call 1-800-GREENTX, or visit www.earthshare-texas.org.

Sunday September 29. Sabine Woods Work Day. Despite a dry period in August, there has been luxuriant growth in the open areas of the Sanctuary. The area of new trees in the east has been brush-hogged. However, there is a lot more that we need to do, and we would like as much help as possible on this work day. Riding mowers, especially heavy duty ones, are most valuable for grooming the trails. Loppers will be the best tool for maintaining the trails inside the woods. We have a few but if you have your own, so much the better. We also would like to continue some thinning of the excessive number of small oak trees in some older parts of the Woods and one or two small chain saws would

be helpful in this process. If you have a larger chain saw, check with us a few days prior in case any larger limbs or dead trees may have fallen and need to be cut.

We plan to start around 7:30 a.m., and will probably work until about noon. We hope that the temperature and the insect population will have diminished by the work day. Sometimes on past fall work days, we have shortened the schedule because of the presence of migrants!

Please bring work gloves and insect repellent, and whatever hand tools you have. We will try to provide light refreshments. For more information, please contact John Whittle at 409-722-4193 or johnawhittle@aol.com.

Thursday October 17. Membership Meeting. Tentative: Stephan Lorenz on birds and birding in Chile. Stephan has presented programs for us before, and they have always been very well received. Full Details in next month's issue.

Saturday October 19. Field Trip to Sabine Woods. This trip will be looking for some of the later migrating species, and may include other places in the Sabine Pass area.

Thursday November 21. Membership Meeting. Further Details in future issues.

Barn Owls

For most people their first sighting of a Barn Owl is while driving through open country at night—a flash of large pale wings in the headlights is usually this species. Barn Owls have a very distinct white, heart-shaped face and dark eyes with a ghostly pale appearance. They are silent predators of the night world. Barn Owls roost in hidden, quiet places during the day. This can be anywhere from a tree, a building, and surprisingly even on the ground in tall grass such as the marsh. You would think that the Barn Owl would be easy prey on the ground, but locating one in the marsh is like looking for a needle in a haystack. They have exceptional hearing, so if a possible predator was approaching they will take flight and relocate.

My first close encounter with a Barn Owl was amongst the rice fields here in southeast Texas. It was mid-morning; I was with a friend walking along a dirt road when we unintentionally flushed a Barn Owl. It flushed just to my right causing me to stop dead in my tracks. It flew just a few feet above my head keeping eye contact with me, and with that ghostly face and those dark eyes staring back at me; it scared the living daylights out of me! I thought it was going to get me! You know like a Mockingbird protecting its nest! Only this Mockingbird is pumping weights and on steroids! Have you seen an owl's talons! Thank goodness I'm not a screamer! Then an instant later my thought was – How cool was that! Since that day I've learned some interesting things about the Barn Owl.

Most people think that all owls hoot, not true. Barn Owls do not hoot. Their call is a drawn-out rasping screech. They also hiss, shriek, and what sounds as if they are either snapping their beak or possibly clicking their tongue. During courtship the male will make a soft twittering noise. Adults returning to a nest may give a low, frog-like croak.

Barn Owls are monogamous. Mated pairs usually stay together as long as both owls are alive. Courtship begins with display flights by males which are accompanied by advertising

calls and chasing the female, during the chase, both the male and the female screech. The male will also hover with feet dangling in front of the perched female for several seconds; these are known as moth flights. During courtship the male will offer the female his prey. Once she has accepted him as her mate they will locate a suitable nesting sight. Barn Owls nest in haystacks, hollow trees, burrows in irrigation canals, in barns, old buildings, or other cavities. Barn Owls do not build a true nest, the female makes a simple nest of debris around the nest including her own regurgitated pellets, shredded with her feet and arranged into a cup. Unlike most birds, Barn Owls may use their nest sites for roosting throughout the year. Nesting sites are often reused from year to year.

The female lays 2-11 eggs (usually about 5), and incubates them for 29-34 days. She begins to incubate as soon as the first egg is laid, so the young hatch 2-3 days apart. The male brings her food while she incubates the eggs. In the first two weeks after the young hatch, the female stays on the nest to brood them. The male continues bringing food for the female and the owlets. He delivers the food to the female, and she feeds the young. After about two weeks, the female will leave the nest for the first time. One of the first things she will do is locate water to bathe. Remember she has not left the nest since she laid her first egg, some 43 to 48 days. She will now hunt with the male to help provide food for the owlets. The young first start to fly at about 60 days, returning to the nest site at night for a few more weeks till they are ready to be on their own. Barn Owls generally raise one or two broods per year, but when food is abundant, they may raise three. This is true to the southern states, due to our milder winters.

The next time you are out in the open country at night listen for the long drawn-out rasping screech of the Barn Owl. They are nothing to be scared of!

Christine Sliva

Field Trip to Liberty – 17 August 2013

August is a tough month for birding in southeast Texas. The heat and bugs often make any outdoor activity unpleasant so choosing a field trip destination for this month can be challenging. In the past, the Golden Triangle Audubon Society has usually chosen to go to Bolivar Flats in August. The beach environment of the flats provides slightly cooler temperatures and fewer bugs but, having already taken a trip there in March, some felt a little more variety was in order. So the decision was made to try a trip to Liberty, Texas for the August field trip and hopefully it would provide some nice birds (and not too tough of conditions).

The main attraction in Liberty this time of year is a gathering of Swallow-tailed Kites. This elegant black and white raptor gathers along the Trinity River bottomlands every year in numbers difficult to find elsewhere in Texas. Formerly quite a rare bird in most of the U.S., the Swallow-tailed Kite is starting to make a comeback and returning to nest in many parts of southeast Texas. Still, any look at a Swallow-tailed Kite is exciting and Liberty is usually the best place to see them. This year however, reports from Liberty had not been very promising. Few kites had been seen and on a previous scouting trip, no Swallow-tailed Kites were spotted! So what would this trip bring?

The beginning was not too auspicious. A quick cruise down Highway 90 between Liberty and Dayton (usually a hotspot for Swallow-tailed Kites) produced nothing. Somewhat dejected, the group went on to phase two of the field trip. This was a trip to Liberty Municipal Park to look for migrants and to still keep a look out for kites. This proved to be a good plan! Almost immediately after parking the cars, a Swallow-tailed Kite was seen soaring overhead! It was soon joined by a second bird and they were well seen by the whole group. But the more the group looked, the more Swallow-tailed Kites they found! Eventually, at least a dozen of these kites were observed over the park making the field trip a success right from the beginning!

But Swallow-tailed Kites were not the only birds seen on the day. Mississippi Kites were even more common over the park than the Swallow-tailed Kites were. At one point, two Mississippi Kites were perched in a dead tree nearby allowing close observation and a few nice photos! A distant Anhinga soared among the kites providing a nice contrast. A Red-shouldered Hawk called noisily from another tree and was also well seen. A good day for raptors all around!

A walk through the Knobby Knees trail, which starts in the wooded areas of the park, provided a nice mix of early migrants and breeding birds typical of the area. This welcome new trail is a joint project of the City of Liberty and the Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge. Although fall Passerine migration was not yet in full stride, this loop trail was quite active. The marked trail connects to a series of other less developed trails that lead deep into the Trinity River bottomlands of the Refuge. Yellow-billed Cuckoos gave their odd knocking calls from high in the trees while Northern Cardinals called more musically from all over. Crow-sized Pileated Woodpeckers were seen and heard and contrasted greatly with the smaller Red-bellied Woodpeckers and much

smaller Downy Woodpeckers common in the park. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird fed on Trumpet Vine while Acadian Flycatchers sallied out from exposed perches to catch flying insects. Roaming flocks of Carolina Chickadees and Tufted Titmice fussed from the trees sometimes dragging a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher with them. Vireos were present in the park as well but not always easy to see. White-eyed Vireos called from the underbrush and low trees while Red-eyed Vireos stayed high overhead. A Yellow-throated Vireo sang for all but only gave brief looks to a few birders. A brilliant red Summer Tanager was eventually coaxed into view while the Carolina Wrens needed no coaxing and eventually came right out in the open!

Warblers are always a popular sight for birders and several species were viewed in the park. Black and White Warblers may have been the most numerous as several were seen creeping up and down tree branches and trunks. Northern Parulas gave their buzzy calls from high above. Several of these appeared to be young birds probably hatched from nests right in the park. A brilliant yellow Prothonotary Warbler was spotted overhead. This is another warbler that likely breeds in Liberty Municipal Park or in nearby areas of the Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge. A Worm-eating Warbler gave good looks to most of the birders while a Pine and a Black-throated Green Warbler were less cooperative.

The change in field trip locations certainly paid off for the group as Liberty really delivered the birds. Of course a field trip is not really over for the true birder until he or she gets home and some of the birds got some nice bonus birds on the trip back to the Golden Triangle. At a traditional spot on Highway 90 near Nome, Wood Storks often gather at this time of year. On the trip back home, some of the birders stopped at this spot and were rewarded with lots of Wood Storks! What was the final number? 200? 300? Possibly more? The final total is difficult to know for sure as many birds were hidden in the trees but what is known for sure is that the Wood Storks capped off another great field trip! Feel free to join the Golden Triangle Audubon Society on their trip in September to Smith Point for the Hawk Watch!

The following species were recorded by the trip leaders:

Anhinga (1); Little Blue Heron (1); Cattle Egret (10); White Ibis (1); Black Vulture (1); Turkey Vulture (2); Swallow-tailed Kite (12); Mississippi Kite (30); Red-shouldered Hawk (2); Yellow-billed Cuckoo (1); Ruby-throated Hummingbird (1); Red-bellied Woodpecker (2); Downy Woodpecker (2); Pileated Woodpecker (4); Acadian Flycatcher (3); Traill's Flycatcher (1); Empidonax species (3); Great Crested Flycatcher (1); Loggerhead Shrike (1); White-eyed Vireo (4); Yellow-throated Vireo (1); Red-eyed Vireo (2); Carolina Chickadee (8); Tufted Titmouse (3); Carolina Wren (3); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (3); Northern Mockingbird (6); Worm-eating Warbler (1); Black-and-white Warbler (4); Northern Parula (2); Prothonotary Warbler (1); Yellow Warbler (1); Pine Warbler (1); Black-throated Green Warbler (1); Summer Tanager (2); Northern Cardinal (4)

Steve Mayes

Bird Sightings – July 2013

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) 722-4193. 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: Very little to comment on in July. The Tropical Mockingbird/hybrid issue raised itself again. Without wishing to claim to be definitive, we have treated these birds as comprising one Tropical Mockingbird and three hybrids, two of them this year's offspring. They have not been seen subsequent to the reports below to the best of our current knowledge.

WHISTLING-DUCK, Blk-bell.	(3-28)	JEF-NEDR 7/3(20) JAW; JEF-NEDR 7/11(10) JAW; JEF-MCFW 7/20(14) JAW; JEF-TX87 7/20(57) JAW; JEF-NEDR 7/28(2) JAW
WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous	(6-6)	JEF 7/6(1) JAW
BOBWHITE, Northern	(15-15)	JEF 7/15(3) CSL
LOON, Common	(22-22)	JEF-PI 7/22(1) JAW
GREBE, Pied-billed	(6-6)	JEF 7/6(2) JAW
STORK, Wood	(6-24)	JEF 7/6(95) SM; JEF 7/9(21) JAW; JEF 7/24(45) JAW
CORMORANT, Neotropic	(6-28)	JEF 6 reps(639)
PELICAN, Brown	(15-28)	JEF 3 reps(70)
BITTERN, Least	(20-28)	JEF-MCFW 7/20(1) JAW; JEF-MCFW 7/28(1) JAW
HERON, Great Blue	(6-28)	JEF 7 reps(14) JJW
EGRET, Great	(6-31)	JEF 11 reps(181)
EGRET, Snowy	(9-28)	JEF 7 reps(159)
HERON, Little Blue	(9-28)	JEF 5 reps(13)
HERON, Tricolored	(15-28)	JEF 4 reps(14)
EGRET, Reddish	(20-20)	JEF-SRSP 7/20(3) JAW
EGRET, Cattle	(6-31)	HAI 1 rep(3); JEF 11 reps(680)
HERON, Green	(3-28)	JEF 8 reps(27)
NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-cr.	(8-26)	JEF 6 reps(15)
IBIS, White	(6-20)	JEF 4 reps(48)
IBIS, White-faced	(9-9)	JEF 7/9(1) JAW
IBIS, Plegadis	(9-24)	JEF 4 reps(216)
SPOONBILL, Roseate	(6-28)	JEF 8 reps(54)
VULTURE, Black	(6-28)	JEF 4 reps(13)
VULTURE, Turkey	(3-31)	HAI 1 rep(4); JEF 11 reps(31)
OSPREY	(28-28)	JEF-MCFW 7/28(1) JAW
KITE, Swallow-tailed	(18-29)	HAI-SILS 7/29(1) SG; ORA-ORG 7/18(1) AA
KITE, Mississippi	(6-6)	JEF-GROV 7/6(3) HD
HAWK, Red-shouldered	(15-15)	JEF 7/15(1) CSL
HAWK, Broad-winged	(6-27)	JEF-GROV 7/6(1) HD; JEF 7/15(1) CSL; JEF-NEDR 7/26(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 7/27(2) JAW
HAWK, Swainson's	(6-31)	JEF 7/6(1) JAW; JEF- NEDR 7/31(1) JJW
HAWK, Red-tailed	(6-24)	HAI-SILS 7/17(1) MG; JEF 7/6(1) JAW; JEF 7/13(1) CSL; JEF 7/24(1) JAW
CARACARA, Crested	(6-20)	JEF 7/6(2) SM; JEF 7/9(2) JAW; JEF-TX87 7/20(3) JAW
GALLINULE, Common	(20-20)	JEF-MCFW 7/20(5) JAW
PLOVER, Snowy	(28-28)	JEF-SRSP 7/28(6) JAW
PLOVER, Wilson's	(15-28)	JEF-PI 7/15(4) JJW; JEF- SRSP 7/20(4) JAW; JEF-SRSP 7/28(30) JAW
PLOVER, Piping	(28-28)	JEF-SRSP 7/28(2) JAW
KILLDEER	(6-28)	HAI 2 reps(3); JEF 7 reps(19)
STILT, Black-necked	(6-28)	JEF 6 reps(46)
SANDPIPER, Spotted	(15-28)	JEF-PI 7/15(5) JJW; JEF-PI 7/22(7) JAW; JEF-PI 7/26(6) JAW; JEF-MCFW 7/28(1) JAW; JEF-PI 7/28(8) JAW; JEF-SRSP 7/28(1) JAW
YELLOWLEGS, Greater	(22-22)	JEF-PI 7/22(1) JAW
WILLET	(15-28)	JEF 5 reps(25)
TURNSTONE, Ruddy	(22-28)	JEF-PI 7/22(2) JAW; JEF- SRSP 7/28(11) JAW
SANDERLING	(20-28)	JEF-SRSP 7/20(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 7/28(12) JAW
DOWITCHER, Long-billed	(24-24)	JEF 7/24(10) JAW
GULL, Laughing	(8-31)	JEF 8 reps(517)
TERN, Least	(15-28)	JEF-PI 7/15(41) JJW; JEF- SRSP 7/20(17) JAW; JEF-PI 7/22(17) JAW; JEF-PI 7/28(9) JAW; JEF-SRSP 7/28(28) JAW
TERN, Least	(15-28)	JEF 4 reps(112)
TERN, Gull-billed	(15-28)	JEF-PI 7/15(1) JJW; JEF-PI 7/22(1) JAW; JEF-PI 7/28(1) JAW; JEF-SRSP 7/28(1) JAW
TERN, Caspian	(15-15)	JEF-PI 7/15(1) JJW
TERN, Black	(15-28)	JEF-PI 7/15(5) JJW; JEF- SRSP 7/20(6) JAW; JEF-PI 7/22(6) JAW; JEF-PI 7/28(57) JAW; JEF-SRSP 7/28(10) JAW
TERN, Common	(15-15)	JEF-PI 7/15(1) JJW
TERN, Forster's	(15-28)	JEF 3 reps(38)
TERN, Royal	(15-28)	JEF 3 reps(135)
TERN, Sandwich	(15-28)	JEF-PI 7/15(1) JJW; JEF- SRSP 7/20(13) JAW; JEF-PI 7/28(2) JAW
SKIMMER, Black	(28-28)	JEF-SRSP 7/28(5) JAW
PIGEON, Rock	(9-28)	HAI 1 rep(12); JEF 8 reps(53)
COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian	(5-30)	JEF 9 reps(31)
DOVE, White-winged	(1-30)	HAI 14 reps(306); JEF 20 reps(169)
DOVE, Mourning	(1-31)	HAI 15 reps(155); JEF 14 reps(172)
DOVE, Inca	(2-30)	HAI 2 reps(2); JEF 9 reps(15)
GROUND-DOVE, Common	(17-17)	JEF-BMT 7/17(1) CSL
CUCKOO, Yellow-billed	(3-28)	JEF-SW 7/3(2) HS; JEF- SW 7/20(3) JAW; JEF 7/22(1) JAW; JEF-SW 7/28(3) JAW
ROADRUNNER, Greater	(2-2)	HAI 7/2(1) JM
OWL, Great Horned	(28-28)	JEF-SW 7/28(1) JAW
NIGHTHAWK, Common	(2-28)	JEF 4 reps(35)
SWIFT, Chimney	(3-25)	HAI 1 rep(12); JEF 10 reps(41)
HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-thr.	(3-31)	HAI 20 reps(32); JEF 5 reps(5)
KINGFISHER, Belted	(6-6)	JEF 7/6(1) SM
WOODPECKER, Red-headed	(14-27)	HAI-SILS 7/14(1) MG; HAI 7/23(1) MG; HAI-SILS 7/27(2) MG
WOODPECKER, Golden-fr.	(3-20)	JEF-SW 7/3(1) HS; JEF- TX87 7/20(1) JAW
WOODPECKER, Red-bellied	(4-30)	HAI 8 reps(14); JEF 14 reps(16)
WOODPECKER, Downy	(3-28)	JEF 8 reps(8)
WOODPECKER, Pileated	(1-27)	HAI 5 reps(5); JEF 1 rep(2)
FLYCATCHER, Gt. Crested	(6-20)	HAI 7/6(5) JM; JEF-SW 7/20(1) JAW
KINGBIRD, Eastern	(3-28)	JEF 8 reps(39)
FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tailed	(6-24)	JEF 7/6(2) JAW; JEF 7/9(5) JAW; JEF 7/13(2) JAW; JEF 7/24(5) JAW
SHRIKE, Loggerhead	(3-28)	JEF 10 reps(34)

VIREO, White-eyed	(17-20)	HAI-SILS 7/17(1) MG; HAI-SILS 7/19(1) MG; HAI-SILS 7/20(1) MG
JAY, Blue	(1-30)	HAI 5 reps(10); JEF 8 reps(15)
CROW, American	(1-27)	HAI 11 reps(21)
CROW, Fish	(8-30)	JEF 2 reps(5)
CROW, species	(6-28)	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 6
MARTIN, Purple	(1-28)	JEF 11 reps(287)
SWALLOW, Cliff	(20-20)	JEF-MCFW 7/20(2) JAW
SWALLOW, Barn	(2-28)	HAI 5 reps(13); JEF 7 reps(77)
SWALLOW species	(6-20)	JEF 3 reps(16)
CHICKADEE, Carolina	(2-31)	HAI 18 reps(47); JEF 1 rep(1)
TITMOUSE, Tufted	(1-31)	HAI 16 reps(44)
WREN, Carolina	(1-31)	HAI 6 reps(6); JEF 1 rep(2)
WREN, Marsh	(20-28)	JEF 2 reps(7)
BLUEBIRD, Eastern	(6-13)	HAI 2 reps(5); JEF 3 reps(6)
ROBIN, American	(3-28)	JEF 11 reps(17)
CATBIRD, Gray	(9-9)	HAI-SILS 7/9(1) MG
MOCKINGBIRD, Northern	(3-31)	HAI 4 reps(25); JEF 21 reps(262)
MOCKINGBIRD, Tropical	(28-31)	JEF-TX87 7/28(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 7/29(1) ZH; JEF-TX87 7/31(1) HS
MOCKINGBIRD, Trop. x N.	(20-31)	JEF-TX87 7/20(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 7/28(1); JEF-TX87 7/29(2) ZH; JEF-TX87 7/31(3?) HS
THRASHER, Brown	(1-20)	HAI-SILS 7/1(2) MG; JEF-SW 7/3(2) HS; JEF 7/4(4) CSL; JEF-SW 7/20(2) JAW
STARLING, European	(2-28)	HAI 5 reps(220); JEF 12 reps(167)
WATERTHRUSH, Louisiana	(20-20)	JEF-SW 7/20(2) JAW
YELLOWTHROAT, Common	(15-28)	JEF 3 reps(6)
WARBLER, Pine	(5-19)	HAI 5 reps(5)
CARDINAL, Northern	(1-31)	HAI 24 reps(1382); JEF 7 reps(13)

BUNTING, Indigo	(20-20)	JEF 7/20(1) JAW
BUNTING, Painted	(20-28)	JEF-SW 7/20(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 7/28(1) JAW
DICKCISSEL	(6-9)	JEF 7/6(1) JAW; JEF 7/9(4) JAW
BLACKBIRD, Red-winged	(3-31)	JEF 11 reps(134)
MEADOWLARK, Eastern	(6-15)	JEF 7/6(2) JAW; JEF 7/9(8) JAW; JEF 7/13(3) JAW; JEF 7/15(4) CSL
GRACKLE, Common	(1-28)	HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 8 reps(44)
GRACKLE, Boat-tailed	(20-28)	JEF 3 reps(24)
GRACKLE, Great-tailed	(5-31)	JEF 12 reps(170)
GRACKLE, Gt./Boat-tailed.	(9-28)	JEF 5 reps(17)
COWBIRD, Brown-headed	(1-20)	HAI 13 reps(422); JEF 4 reps(39)
ORIOLE, Orchard	(3-28)	HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 3 reps(5)
FINCH, House	(1-31)	HAI 13 reps(35); JEF 2 reps(3)
SPARROW, House	(4-30)	JEF 12 reps(47)
Number of Species		108
Number of Individuals		16926

County Abbreviations:

HAI — Hardin; JEF — Jefferson; ORA — Orange

Location Codes

BMT — Beaumont; GROV — Groves; MCFW — McFaddin NWR; NEDR — Nederland; ORG — Orange; 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

AA — Andy Allen; CSL — Christine Sliva; HD — Howard Davis; HS — Harlan Stewart; JAW — John Whittle; JJW — John and Jana Whittle; JM — John Mariani; MG — Melanie Goetsell; SG — Sherry Gibson; SM — Steve Mayes; ZH — Zach Hutchinson

Waterbird Conservation

The following introduction to Waterbird Conservation is adapted from the National Audubon Society website at www.audubon.org. Waterbirds are a conspicuous element of the local avifauna, and we see large numbers of many species. While we see very, very few seabirds (as defined here), since almost all prefer much colder water than the Gulf of Mexico provides, we do see many wintering and migrating waterbirds.

Introduction

North American waterbirds are a diverse group of beautiful species that share with us numerous and various freshwater and marine habitats. Their important roles in the functioning of aquatic ecosystems make them sensitive indicators of the health of these environments so important to many species, including our own. Throughout history, these birds have enriched and supported human existence and experience in many ways - economically, culturally, and aesthetically.

Waterbird conservation has been a part of Audubon's heritage since its inception more than a century ago. We invite you to explore these web pages to learn about waterbird species, the conservation issues that they confront on today's landscape and conservation projects of the past and present that address these issues.

What Are Waterbirds?

Different organizations define "waterbirds" differently. In general, the term describes a diverse group of birds that are ecologically tied to bodies of water for some part or parts of their lives. Included also in some definitions are several "taxonomic waterbirds" - species without ties to aquatic

habitats but which are members of bird families otherwise considered to be waterbirds.

Audubon defines waterbirds broadly and inclusively: all birds predominantly associated with water, either ecologically or taxonomically. By the criteria of all organizations, loons, grebes, pelicans, cormorants, bitterns, egrets, herons, ibises, rails, coots, gulls, terns, and skimmers are waterbirds. We include in our definition waterfowl (ducks and geese), shorebirds (oystercatchers, stilts, plovers, sandpipers, and phalaropes), and seabirds (albatrosses, petrels, shearwaters, murrelets, auklets, and puffins), which are considered by some to be separate groups. We also include other species of birds that are affiliated with water and wetland habitats, such as ospreys, kingfishers, and several kinds of passerines (e.g., some species of flycatchers, swallows, warblers, sparrows, and blackbirds), even though their families are not generally associated with bodies of water.

Our focus is on the conservation of native North American waterbirds; species that breed, winter, or migrate across the continental landscape. We exclude species that have been introduced, species that visit only occasionally, and species whose geographic ranges include North America only at the edges. In other words, we consider as North American

waterbirds any species that could be affected by changes to continental aquatic habitats, i.e., those species for which we have a "conservation responsibility."

Why Are Waterbirds Important?

Birds are crucial to the healthy functioning of many natural systems on Earth. Birds of all kinds have played important roles in human history, yet waterbirds share with us special, intimate relationships based on admiration, imagination, exploitation, and the watery habitats we both require or enjoy. The importance of these species ranges from the biological niches they occupy to nutrition, income, and aesthetic inspiration.

First and foremost, waterbirds play an integral role in a variety of ecosystems. They are recyclers, predators, and prey. Because they require water and associated habitat of adequate quality and quantity, their successes or declines are indicative of the health of environments. Throughout our long association, waterbirds - both wild and domestic - have fed and warmed men and women with their flesh and feathers. Humans have been so inspired by waterbirds that they have incorporated them into their religions; made them symbols of nations, states, and regions; and painted, photographed, and sculpted them in an effort to capture their beauty and mystique.

Today, waterbirds are big business. Domestic waterbirds provide the world with meat, eggs, feathers, and down. Bird hunting and bird watching together are a \$35 billion industry. On the other hand, waterbirds occasionally compete with humans for resources, and are thus sometimes reviled for their consumption of our crops and aquacultural products.

Finally, with increasing frequency, waterbirds and other birds provide us with insights into the workings of the natural world. Studies of avian evolution, inheritance, learning, population dynamics, flight, hormonal activity, gene expression, brain mapping, and behavior are providing us with answers to questions that have intrigued us for centuries.

For all of these reasons, waterbirds are of special interest to everyone concerned with conservation and environmental health.

Conservation Status of Waterbirds

There is good and bad news on the waterbird conservation front. On the bright side, many of the waterbirds that breed in the U.S. have done relatively well in the last 20 years, largely because of an infusion of funding into wetland protection and other types of conservation programs. Yet habitat destruction continues to outpace protection, and many North American waterbirds have yet to rebound from the cumulative effects of 300 years of wetland loss since European settlement. Waterbird populations face innumerable other threats associated with human choices and behaviors. Many species of seabirds and shorebirds are of particularly high conservation concern.

Of 265 species of North American waterbirds:

- 37 are red Watchlist species
- 35 are yellow Watchlist species
- 24 are Federally listed as Endangered or Threatened

Waterbird population trend data indicate that many species are in decline. Results from analyses of long-term data (from 1966-2004) from both Audubon's Christmas Bird Count (CBC) and the United States Geological Survey's Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) suggest that almost one-third of waterbird species are experiencing decreases in population size, some more so than others:

- 49 (23%) of the 212 NA waterbird species covered by the CBC are "Declining" - the equivalent to a loss of 15% over a 30-year period.
- 16 (8%) of the 212 CBC species are "Significantly Declining" - the equivalent to a loss of 50% over 30 years.
- 30 (25%) of the 121 NA waterbird species covered by the BBS are "Declining."
- 11 (9%) of the 121 BBS species are "Significantly Declining."

Because of the diversity of human-mediated and natural threats to the viability of many waterbird populations, conservation efforts are varied. Yet because habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation are the most serious threats facing most populations, many approaches to conservation involve the protection, restoration, or enhancement of breeding, molting, wintering, or migratory stopover areas.

Results from analyses of CBC and BBS data from 1966-2004 are encouraging:

- Population sizes of 62 (29%) of 212 CBC species and 28 (23%) of BBS species have increased by the equivalent of 15% over a 30-year period.
- Population sizes of 56 (26%) of 212 CBC species and 32 (27%) of 121 BBS species have increased "significantly" - the equivalent of an increase of 50% over a 30-year period.
- Population trends for an additional 29 (14%) of 212 CBC species and 20 (17%) of 121 BBS species have been stable.
- Species-specific success stories reflect the dependence of waterbirds on clean water and its associated habitats, and the beneficial effects of targeted conservation programs.

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For example:

- Piping Plover numbers have increased from approximately 1266 pairs in 1987 (Haig 1992) to approximately 3200 pairs in 2005 (Birdlife International 2006) because of successful habitat protection and management practices.
- The recovery of Brown Pelicans has come about because of Endangered Species Act protections and the banning of the use of DDT in the U.S.
- Hunted to dangerously low numbers and threatened by habitat loss, American Black Ducks are experiencing the beneficial effects of regulated hunting and the protection of thousands of hectares of habitat from 1986-1998 (NAS 2002).

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Golden Triangle Audubon C3ZW250Z

Brown Pelican

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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 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 fee. Most rare bird sightings in Texas are posted on the TEXBIRDS listserv. Archives of the listserv are at www.freelists.org/archive/texbirds. It is not necessary to subscribe to the listserv to view the archives, which include all recent postings. Postings for the last two weeks are also available at <http://birding.aba.org/maillist/TX>.

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..>