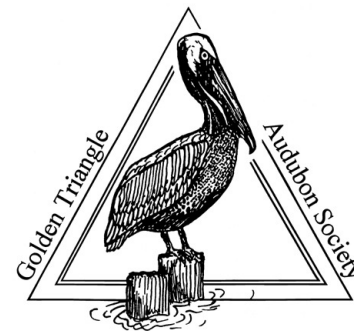


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 19 No. 12

December 2013

Sea Rim State Park Christmas Bird Count Friday January 3, 2014 Meet in Sabine Pass at 7:00 a.m.

at the intersection of Highway 87 and FM3322 in Sabine Pass. This is at the stop sign in Sabine Pass, where Highway 87 turns west.

Countdown dinner at 6:00 p.m., location to be confirmed.

Please contact John Whittle at johnawhittle@aol.com or 409-722-4193 (H), and let us know you plan to attend so we can make the best possible area assignments.

Orange County Christmas Bird Count Wednesday January 1, 2014 Meet in Orange at 7:00 a.m.

at the Service Station at the intersection of Highway 105 and FM1442.

Contact Ken Sztraky 409-385-2835 (H) or berrysheepfarm@att.net.

Please join us for what we hope will be two enjoyable birding days. All are invited, even if you are not an experienced birder or are only able to bird for part of the day. Feeder watchers are welcome to participate. Let us know in advance and we will find a suitable group for you to join. The more pairs of eyes in a group, the more birds will be seen.

Other local counts which will welcome your participation include the **Turkey Creek** Count (in the Big Thicket north of Kountze) on **Saturday, December 14** (contact John Whittle at johnawhittle@aol.com), the **Bolivar Peninsula** Count on **Thursday December 19** (contact Steve Mayes at sgmayes@hotmail.com or 409-722-5807), **Johnson Bayou** count on **Saturday December 21** (contact Ken Sztraky, berrysheepfarm@att.net or 409-385-2835). and the **Beech Creek** Count (in the Steinhagen Lake area) on **Saturday December 28** (contact as for Turkey Creek). More details on page 2.

The Brown Pelican

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Golden Triangle
Audubon Society

Web Site for more information
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

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Nederland, Texas 77627-1292

Calendar of Events

Saturday December 14: Turkey Creek. Centered in the Turkey Creek unit of the Big Thicket NP north of Kountze. Contact John Whittle (johnawhittle@aol.com or 409-722-4193)

Thursday December 19: Bolivar Peninsula. High Island and Anahuac NWR areas. This count was compiled by Bill Graber for fifty years, and has always been among the top counts in the nation. The count circle includes High Island, Rollover Pass and all of Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. Contact Steve Mayes (sgmayes@hotmail.com or 409-722-5807)

Saturday December 21: Johnson Bayou, LA. Centered on Johnson Bayou in Cameron Parish. This area of Cameron Parish is recovering from two devastating hurricanes. This count has access to oilfield and Gray estate properties that are not accessible any other time. Contact Ken Sztraky (berrysheepfarm@att.net or 409-385-2835)

Saturday December 28: Beech Creek. Centered in the Steinhagen Lake area of Tyler and Jasper counties. In addition to Steinhagen Lake, this count includes all of Martin Dies State park, and the Corps of Engineers picnic areas and campgrounds around the lake. Contact John Whittle (johnawhittle@aol.com or 409-722-4193)

Wednesday January 1, 2014: Orange County. See page 1.

Friday January 3, 2014: Sea Rim SP. See page 1 for details.

Thursday January 16, 2014. Membership Meeting. Program: David Bradford: Birding Alaska

Saturday January 18, 2014. Field Trip. Tentatively, this trip will be to Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, including both the main unit and the Skillern Tract, looking primarily for waterfowl but also raptors and sparrows. We may also bird some of the rice field areas in Chambers County

mostly north of IH-10. We ran this trip in 2012, and it was spectacularly successful in finding more than 35,000 geese, seven Bald Eagles and one Golden Eagle among other species.

We plan to meet at the temporary Visitor Information Station just beyond the entrance at 8:00 a.m. It is anticipated that this field trip will not necessitate extensive walking, and all roads that we will be allowed to use will be easily passable in ordinary vehicles.

To reach Anahuac NWR from Winnie, take Highway 124 south to FM1985. (It is 11.0 miles from IH-10 and half a mile less from Highway 73.) Turn right (west) on FM1985 and proceed another 11.0 miles to the well-marked Anahuac NWR Access Road on the left (south). The entrance to the Refuge is just over three miles down the access road.

This information is tentative. We will confirm the destination much nearer the time.

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. **We need volunteers to bring items for all the spring 2014 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! Even if you would like to bring drinks and cookies or something similar, please call Jana Whittle at (409) 722-4193 (or email her at janafw@aol.com) **as far in advance as possible.** Please help if you can!



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.

Field Trip to West Jefferson County – 23 November 2013

Our annual field trip to West Jefferson County is perhaps the most anticipated field trip of the year. Over the last 15 or 20 years, this area has continued to grow in popularity as a birding area, and seems to produce additional species each year. Originally almost exclusively a rice-farming area, now, while rice is still the predominant crop, there are areas of pasture, fallow fields and wooded areas as well as some fields used for crawfish farming. The core of the area is bounded by US90 on the north, the Liberty County line on the west, TX124 on the southeast, and Major Drive/FM364 on the east. There are also some areas between US90 and TX105. Most of the area is readily accessible by means of well-maintained county roads, which are lightly traveled and excellent birding roads. Highlights of winter birding in the area are the numerous raptors, the sparrows, and the Sandhill Cranes. In wet years, there can be many waterfowl in appropriate areas.

This year, the weather forecast portended ominously, and, although the direst of the predictions did not come to pass, it was not the best of days to be birding. Fourteen hardy souls assembled at 8:00 a.m. at the intersection of Johnson Road and FM365 on a gloomy cold November day with the temperature just over 50 degrees and a biting 15 kt. northeast wind, gusting to 20 kt. Although there was clearly moisture in the air, apart from a short period of drizzle mid-morning, and a heavier rain shower fortuitously occurring while the group was at lunch, the rain held off until after 1:30 p.m.

The numbers of Sandhill Cranes have been slowly increasing since the mid-nineties, when the wintering range of the species spread eastwards from Galveston Isle. So each year, one of our important objectives on this field trip is to view the cranes. We were very worried this year. Although we knew up to 1200 cranes could be seen half an hour before sunset as they flew in to their roosting areas (in some of the less accessible parts of the area north of Willis Road, south of Blair Road and mostly west of FM1406/FM365), we had not been able to find where they were feeding during the day. In fact, we suspected most were spending their days in Liberty and/or Chambers County west and southwest of their roosting areas. However, we need not have worried. Just after 8 a.m. several small flocks of cranes totaling 35 birds were seen flying low from north to south just east of our assembly point. Even nicer, we later found over 200 cranes on both sides of League Road less than a mile south of Johnson Road. We were able to view these cranes on the ground from a discrete distance.

We first birded the area along Johnson Road near our assembly point. In a couple of recent years, we had been able to persuade LeConte's Sparrows to perch up. This year, the habitat, including extensive areas of bluestem, looked as good as it has been in several years, but the only sparrows we could find were Swamp Sparrows. However, a couple of Sedge Wrens and a Common Yellowthroat did cooperate. As always on this field trip, everywhere we went we were looking at flying raptors and other species. An American Kestrel and a Red-tailed Hawk presaged many others of both species. Northern Harriers are always present in numbers. This year, we saw several "Gray Ghosts" as the mostly gray adult males

are affectionately known to many birders. Eastern Phoebes and Eastern Meadowlarks were scattered throughout the area, while, as usual, Loggerhead Shrikes were found on many utility wires. Despite the low cloud base, we did have some other "flyovers." Four dowitchers and both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs were identified. Going in and out of the clouds were flocks of Snow Geese (one with three very obvious Ross's Geese included) and Greater White-fronted Geese that were both seen and heard. Only some of the flying ducks could be identified, including, however, Blue-winged Teal and Northern Pintail. As we approached the intersection with Heisig Road, our attention was drawn to a dark hawk perched on a dead tree. After considerable study, and only after it flew, were we able to determine that it was a first-year White-tailed Hawk, a species whose range is creeping very slowly eastwards into the area.

Eventually, we reached our next objective, the patch of woods at the northern end of Heisig Road. Initially, this area was disappointing, although we did find several white-throated Sparrows working some low weedy vegetation along the side of the road. Then both Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets were seen, along with several American Goldfinch. Three loud Carolina Wrens were not actually seen. A Downy Woodpecker and several Red-bellied Woodpeckers were in the area. Seeing some Sandhill Cranes in the distant west, we decided to process south down Heisig Road to reach League Road. The cranes had drawn attention to five raptors, cavorting low over the distant Eucalyptus trees. These were eventually identified as Crested Caracara, another species that has expanded into Jefferson County in recent years.

The roadsides of Heisig harbored a lot of Savannah Sparrows, and at least one classically plumaged Song Sparrow. Two Wilson's Snipe were flushed from the ditches, and two Sharp-shinned Hawks were seeking the same birds we were, but with more ominous intent. We also saw a Cooper's Hawk further down the road. A tiny pond held a Pied-billed Grebe. Heading back north on League Road, there were several Loggerhead Shrikes, several more Northern Harriers, and even a flock of about 25 House Sparrows before we came upon the Sandhill Cranes mentioned earlier. Continuing west along League Road, we reached the intersection of Old League Road and League/Willis Roads. Despite the distinctly unfavorable flycatching weather, we soon located the immaculately plumaged male Vermilion Flycatcher that is spending its third winter around the farm house at this corner. It was first found high up in an oak, but it cooperated and moved down to a low fence wire remarkably close to our vehicles. No doubt a result of the wind, it was catching insects near the ground in the vegetation rather than its more normal catching in the air. The wintering site fidelity of this species is well known, and often returns for about four years to the same location. The Vermilion helped draw our attention to a few White-crowned Sparrows working in the same area along the side of Old League Road. Another Wilson's Snipe flushed as we passed.

By now, it was time for lunch and to take care of other essentials. En route to Fannett, we added Belted Kingfisher,

Black Vulture and Blue Jay to our growing list, along with Mourning Dove and more Killdeer.

After lunch, we headed back to the center of the "South China Prairie" as one of our members calls it. South China Road runs from FM365 north to US90, becoming South Broadway in China for the last segment, and is one of two "main" county roads running north-south through the area. On this trip, we elected to travel on the other one, the somewhat less travelled McDermand Road, in order to stop at a growing patch of woods where it crosses Pignut Gully. On the lower part of the road, we had a rather dark Red-Tailed Hawk and three swallows not confirmed as to species. After some encouragement, we were able to view a nice assortment of woodland species. Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler was altogether an expected species, but Tufted Titmouse and Pine Warbler were less so in this somewhat isolated patch of woods. The *pièce de résistance*, however, was when two Eastern Screech Owls replied to an imitation of their call. Further up the road, we came across a nice adult Red-shouldered Hawk, while the characteristic mewing call of the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker added yet another species to our growing list.

Ordinarily, we would have proceeded along Lawhon Road east towards the community of New Bethel. However, the bridge over Greenpond Gully is out for rebuild (which appears near completion), so we had to go the long way round and approach from New Bethel. On the south side of Lawhon Road just west of New Bethel are some flooded fields, most recently used for crawfish farming. Several rafts of ducks were in these fields, including a good number of Green-winged Teal (and a small number of Blue-winged Teal), lots of Gadwall, some Ruddy Duck, some Northern Shoveler, a least one pair of American Wigeon and at least one Ring-necked Duck along with some Lesser Scaup and lots of American Coot. Two modest flocks of Northern Pintails flew over. With this section of Lawhon Road currently leading nowhere, the hedgerow on the side of it, often very birdy in normal circumstances, was alive with birds, despite the increasing intensity of the rain. Myrtle Warblers, Common Yellowthroats, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, White-crowned Sparrow, Orange-crowned Warbler were all present. We were able to see some nearby Roseate Spoonbills in a marshy field further west, and a lot of White-Ibis in a distant part of the first field. A Wilson's Snipe flew by, and a few Tree Swallows were working over the marsh. There was even a Ring-billed Gull in the area, well inland though it is. We concluded the field trip around 3:00 p.m. with the temperature down to 48 degrees and the rain not showing any sign of letting up.

We had included that part of Lawhon Road in the trip in the hope of finding one of the Bald Eagles that had been present a few days earlier. We did not see any, but another birder, not with our group, did see one near the closed bridge about an hour later. This same birder also reported seeing a Short-eared Owl on Willis Road. One of our group returned home by way of South China Road and reported seeing some Cattle Egrets there.

We had a very productive trip in spite of the weather, and it only goes to show that there are many interesting birds to see there. One cannot expect to find all the birds that are there in only one trip! The list below includes only the birds seen by

members of the trip – but even so it contains over 80 species! Even then it likely does not include every species seen by every member on the trip. This area is a great place to practice your identification skills or just enjoy the birds – lots of birds, a great variety of birds and quiet roads where stopping is easily possible.

Greater White-fronted Goose (150); Snow Goose (163); Ross's Goose (3); Gadwall (100); American Wigeon (2); Mottled Duck (5); Blue-winged Teal (6); Teal species (35); Northern Shoveler (5); Northern Pintail (69); Green-winged Teal (80); Ring-necked Duck (2); Lesser Scaup (5); Duck Species (10); Ruddy Duck (20); Pied-billed Grebe (1); Anhinga (2); Great Blue Heron (7); Great Egret (10); Snowy Egret (8); Cattle Egret (5); White Ibis (174); Plegadis species Ibis (4); Roseate Spoonbill (27); Black Vulture (1); Turkey Vulture (6); Northern Harrier (12); Sharp-shinned Hawk (3); Cooper's Hawk (2); Red-shouldered Hawk (2); White-tailed Hawk (1); Red-tailed Hawk (10); Crested Caracara (6); American Kestrel (16); American Coot (100); Sandhill Crane (281); Killdeer (55); Greater Yellowlegs (1); Lesser Yellowlegs (4); "Peep" Sandpiper (5); Dowitcher species (4); Wilson's Snipe (4); Laughing Gull (1); Ring-billed Gull (1); Eurasian Collared-Dove (14); Mourning Dove (78); Eastern Screech-Owl (2); Belted Kingfisher (2); Red-bellied Woodpecker (7); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (1); Downy Woodpecker (1); Eastern Phoebe (7); Vermilion Flycatcher (1); Loggerhead Shrike (11); Blue Jay (3); American Crow (1); Crow species (2); Tree Swallow (5); Swallow species (3); Tufted Titmouse (3); Carolina Wren (3); House Wren (2); Sedge Wren (2); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (3); Golden-crowned Kinglet (2); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (6); Northern Mockingbird (9); Brown Thrasher (1); European Starling (56); Orange-crowned Warbler (5); Common Yellowthroat (6); Pine Warbler (5); Yellow-rumped Warbler (49); Savannah Sparrow (88); Song Sparrow (3); White-throated Sparrow (6); White-crowned Sparrow (6); Northern Cardinal (4); Red-winged Blackbird (15); Eastern Meadowlark (17); Meadowlark species (2); Common Grackle (15); Great-tailed Grackle (5); Blackbird species (1000); American Goldfinch (7); House Sparrow (25).

Election Results

At our Annual Meeting on November 21, the following were elected to officer and board positions:

President (2014-15 term): Gary Kelley
Vice-President (2014-15 term): Sherrie Roden
Treasurer: (Calendar Year 2014 term): Christine Sliva
Secretary: (Calendar Year 2014 term): John Whittle

Board Members-at large (Calendar Years 2014 Terms):
Edra Bogucki, Howard Davis, Gerald Duhon, Sherry Gibson, John Haynes, John Mariani, Steve Mayes, Harlan Stewart, Jana Whittle.

We offer our congratulations to those elected and express our gratitude for their willingness to serve.

Bird Sightings – October 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: October is always a very full month, including as it does, the heart of fall passerine migration, fall hawk migration and the beginning of the arrival of our winter residents. Perhaps the most unusual warbler was a Blackpoll Warbler at Sabine Woods on October 26. Fall Blackpolls are very rare on the Upper Texas Coast. There were several sightings of Eastern Whip-poor-will at Sabine Woods, perhaps a single bird lingering. A Smith's Longspur and two Black-headed Grosbeaks are included below, but neither was confirmed by photographs or a second observer. Altogether an interesting month.

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------|--|--|--|--|
| WHISTLING-DUCK, Blk-bell. | (1-20) | JEF 5 reps(180) | | | |
| GOOSE, White-fronted | (18-19) | JEF-SW 10/18(1) JAW; JEF-SW 10/18(35) JHH; JEF-SW 10/19(25) FTSW; JEF-SW 10/19(25) FTSW; JEF-SW 10/19(25) FTSW | | | |
| GOOSE, Snow | (19-19) | JEF-SW 10/19(3) FTSW; JEF-SW 10/19(3) FTSW; JEF-SW 10/19(3) FTSW | | | |
| DUCK, Wood | (12-12) | JEF-TP 10/12(15) RWBL | | | |
| GADWALL | (20-20) | JEF-TP 10/20(6) SM | | | |
| DUCK, Mottled | (8-28) | JEF 5 reps(20) | | | |
| TEAL, Blue-winged | (8-24) | JEF 5 reps(951) | | | |
| SHOVELER, Northern | (20-24) | JEF-TP 10/20(6) SM; JEF-TP 10/24(25) JAW | | | |
| PINTAIL, Northern | (20-20) | JEF-MCFW 10/20(28) GP | | | |
| TEAL, Green-winged | (20-24) | JEF-TP 10/20(4) SM; JEF-TP 10/24(10) JAW | | | |
| DUCK, Ruddy | (12-20) | JEF-TP 10/12(1) RWBL; JEF-TP 10/20(1) SM | | | |
| GREBE, Pied-billed | (20-20) | JEF-MCFW 10/20(3) JAW; JEF-TP 10/20(7) SM | | | |
| CORMORANT, Neotropic | (1-30) | JEF 18 reps(130); ORA 1 rep(3) | | | |
| CORMORANT, Double-crest. | (12-26) | JEF 4 reps(16) | | | |
| ANHINGA | (7-20) | JEF 4 reps(144) | | | |
| PELICAN, Amer. White | (7-26) | JEF 9 reps(435) | | | |
| PELICAN, Brown | (7-28) | JEF 9 reps(56) | | | |
| HERON, Great Blue | (1-28) | JEF 13 reps(28) | | | |
| EGRET, Great | (1-30) | JEF 30 reps(100); ORA 1 rep(1) | | | |
| EGRET, Snowy | (1-30) | JEF 23 reps(85); ORA 1 rep(1) | | | |
| HERON, Little Blue | (12-20) | JEF 6 reps(6) | | | |
| HERON, Tricolored | (1-28) | JEF 8 reps(24) | | | |
| EGRET, Reddish | (8-8) | JEF-MURW 10/8(4) JA | | | |
| EGRET, Cattle | (2-25) | JEF 14 reps(227) | | | |
| HERON, Green | (7-13) | JEF 6 reps(6) | | | |
| NIGHT-HERON, Black-cr. | (12-20) | JEF-TP 10/12(1) RWBL; JEF-TP 10/20(2) SM | | | |
| NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-cr. | (14-16) | JEF-SNDY 10/14(1) JAW; JEF-SW 10/16(1) JHH | | | |
| IBIS, White | (1-28) | JEF 30 reps(1605) | | | |
| IBIS, White-faced | (20-24) | JEF 10/20(30) SM; JEF-TP 10/20(50) SM; JEF-TP 10/24(10) JAW | | | |
| IBIS, Plegadis | (8-29) | JEF 5 reps(125) | | | |
| SPOONBILL, Roseate | (1-26) | JEF 16 reps(55) | | | |
| VULTURE, Black | (1-28) | JEF 23 reps(139) | | | |
| VULTURE, Turkey | (1-28) | HAI 1 rep(4); JEF 36 reps(122) | | | |
| OSPREY | (1-28) | JEF-TX87 10/1(2) JAW; JEF-SW 10/6(1) SM; JEF-MURW 10/8(2) JA; JEF-MCFW 10/20(2) JAW; JEF-TX87 10/26(1) JAW; JEF 10/28(2) JAW | | | |
| KITE, White-tailed | (6-20) | JEF-SW 10/6(1) SM; JEF-SW 10/7(1) JHH; JEF-MCFW 10/20(1) JAW | | | |
| EAGLE, Bald | (16-20) | JEF-TP 10/20(2) SM; ORA 10/16(2) CSL | | | |
| HARRIER, Northern | (14-28) | JEF 9 reps(34) | | | |
| HAWK, Sharp-shinned | (6-25) | JEF 5 reps(6) | | | |
| HAWK, Cooper's | (1-26) | JEF 13 reps(15) | | | |
| HAWK, Red-shouldered | (7-30) | JEF 9 reps(10) | | | |
| HAWK, Broad-winged | (6-28) | JEF 19 reps(61) | | | |
| HAWK, Swainson's | (1-2) | JEF-TX87 10/1(1) JAW; JEF 10/2(1) JJW | | | |
| HAWK, White-tailed | (19-19) | JEF-SW 10/19(1) FTSW; JEF-SW 10/19(1) FTSW | | | |
| HAWK, Red-tailed | (11-29) | JEF 12 reps(29) | | | |
| CARACARA, Crested | (7-28) | JEF 8 reps(17) | | | |
| KESTREL, American | (1-29) | JEF 20 reps(74) | | | |
| MERLIN | (1-22) | JEF 9 reps(11) | | | |
| FALCON, Peregrine | (1-20) | JEF-MCFW 10/1(1) JAW; JEF-TX87 10/1(2) JAW; JEF-SW 10/12(1) RWBL; JEF-MCFW 10/20(2) GP; JEF-TX87 10/20(1) JAW | | | |
| RAIL, Clapper | (12-26) | JEF-SW 10/12(1) RWBL; JEF-TXPT 10/26(6) SM | | | |
| RAIL, King | (24-24) | JEF 10/24(1) JAW | | | |
| RAIL, Virginia | (12-20) | JEF-TP 10/12(1) RWBL; JEF-TP 10/20(3) SM | | | |
| SORA | (12-20) | JEF-TP 10/12(1) RWBL; JEF-TP 10/20(2) SM | | | |
| GALLINULE, Common | (2-20) | JEF 4 reps(32) | | | |
| COOT, American | (20-24) | JEF 2 reps(95) | | | |
| PLOVER, Black-bellied | (1-20) | JEF-MCFW 10/1(1) JAW; JEF 10/20(1) SM | | | |
| PLOVER, Snowy | (1-1) | JEF-MCFW 10/1(2) JAW | | | |
| KILLDEER | (1-29) | JEF 15 reps(118) | | | |
| OYSTERCATCHER, Amer. | (26-26) | JEF-TXPT 10/26(2) SM | | | |
| STILT, Black-necked | (1-26) | JEF 7 reps(73) | | | |
| AVOCET, American | (26-26) | JEF-TXPT 10/26(50) SM | | | |
| YELLOWLEGS, Greater | (8-26) | JEF 6 reps(12) | | | |
| WILLET | (1-26) | JEF 4 reps(17) | | | |
| YELLOWLEGS, Lesser | (8-20) | JEF 3 reps(40) | | | |
| SANDWILING | (1-1) | JEF-MCFW 10/1(2) JAW | | | |
| SANDPIPER, Least | (20-26) | JEF 10/20(10) SM; JEF-TXPT 10/26(1) SM | | | |
| SANDPIPER, Peep | (19-20) | JEF 2 reps(203) | | | |
| DOWITCHER, Short-billed | (8-8) | JEF-MURW 10/8(10) JA | | | |
| DOWITCHER species | (20-20) | JEF 10/20(250) SM | | | |
| SNIBE, Wilson's | (24-24) | JEF 10/24(2) JAW | | | |
| GULL, Laughing | (1-30) | JEF 17 reps(356); ORA 1 rep(1) | | | |
| GULL, Ring-billed | (8-8) | JEF-MURW 10/8(10) JA | | | |
| GULL, Herring | (26-26) | JEF-TXPT 10/26(1) SM | | | |
| TERN, Caspian | (26-26) | JEF-TXPT 10/26(2) SM | | | |
| TERN, Forster's | (8-28) | JEF 7 reps(47) | | | |
| TERN, Royal | (1-26) | JEF 4 reps(6) | | | |
| TERN, Sandwich | (26-26) | JEF-TXPT 10/26(1) SM | | | |
| PIGEON, Rock | (1-30) | JEF 12 reps(144); ORA 1 rep(20) | | | |
| COLLARED-DOVE, Euras. | (9-24) | JEF 10/9(1) JAW; JEF 10/20(2) SM; JEF 10/24(2) JAW | | | |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------|---|
| DOVE, White-winged | (1-28) | HAI 3 reps(30); JEF 23 reps(231) |
| DOVE, Mourning | (1-29) | HAI 2 reps(16); JEF 43 reps(769) |
| DOVE, Inca | (15-15) | JEF-NEDR 10/15(1) JAW |
| CUCKOO, Yellow-billed | (6-20) | JEF 11 reps(29) |
| OWL, Barn | (7-28) | JEF 19 reps(31) |
| OWL, Great Horned | (10-31) | HAI 4 reps(5); JEF 6 reps(10) |
| NIGHTHAWK, Common | (12-12) | JEF-SW 10/12(1) JAW; JEF- SW 10/12(1) JHH; JEF-SW 10/12(1) SM |
| WILL'S-WIDOW, Chuck- | (1-1) | JEF-SW 10/1(2) JAW |
| WHIP-POOR-WILL, Eastern | (18-25) | JEF-SW 10/18(1) JAW; JEF- SW 10/18(1) JHH; JEF-SW 10/19(1) FTSW; JEF-SW 10/19(1) FTSW; JEF-SW 10/19(1) FTSW; JEF-SW 10/22(1) JHH; JEF-SW 10/25(1) RW |
| SWIFT, Chimney | (2-11) | JEF-NEDR 10/2(2) JJW; JEF-NEDR 10/11(1) JJW |
| HUMMINGBIRD, Buff-bellied | (31-31) | JEF-NEDR 10/31(1) JJW |
| HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-thr. | (1-26) | HAI 18 reps(268); JEF 48 reps(1238) |
| HUMMINGBIRD, Black-ch. | (31-31) | JEF-NEDR 10/31(1) JJW |
| HUMMINGBIRD, Rufous | (1-31) | JEF-BMT 10/1(1 thru 31) |
| HUMMINGBIRD, Selasphorus | (26-31) | JEF-NEDR 10/26(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 10/28(1) JAW; JEF-NEDR 10/31(1) JJW |
| HUMMINGBIRD species | (1-31) | JEF 12 reps(13) |
| KINGFISHER, Belted | (1-29) | JEF 16 reps(29) |
| WOODPECKER, Red-head | (27-27) | JEF-BMT 10/27(2) HJ |
| WOODPECKER, Golden-fr. | (6-28) | JEF 14 reps(19) |
| WOODPECKER, Red-bellied | (7-28) | HAI 6 reps(8); JEF 9 reps(13) |
| SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied | (6-26) | JEF 11 reps(18) |
| WOODPECKER, Downy | (6-29) | JEF 29 reps(61) |
| FLICKER, Northern | (6-26) | JEF 28 reps(42) |
| WOODPECKER, Pileated | (1-31) | HAI 13 reps(13); JEF 2 reps(2) |
| WOOD-PEWEE, Eastern | (1-28) | JEF 29 reps(82) |
| FLYCATCHER, Yellow-bell. | (6-7) | JEF-SW 10/6(2) SM; JEF- SW 10/7(2) JAW; JEF-SW 10/7(2) JHH |
| FLYCATCHER, Willow | (6-6) | JEF-SW 10/6(1) SM |
| FLYCATCHER, Traill's | (7-7) | JEF-SW 10/7(1) JAW; JEF- SW 10/7(1) JHH |
| FLYCATCHER, Least | (1-22) | JEF 11 reps(11) |
| EMPIDONAX species | (1-19) | JEF 9 reps(20) |
| PHOEBE, Eastern | (7-29) | JEF 26 reps(138) |
| FLYCATCHER, Vermilion | (20-26) | JEF 10/20(1) SM; JEF-TX87 10/26(1) JAW |
| FLYCATCHER, Ash-throated | (18-18) | JEF-SW 10/18(1) JAW; JEF- SW 10/18(1) JHH |
| FLYCATCHER, Gt. Crested | (1-25) | JEF-SW 10/1(2) JAW; JEF- SW 10/6(2) SM; JEF-SW 10/7(3) JAW; JEF-SW 10/7(2) JHH; JEF-SW 10/25(1) JHH |
| KINGBIRD, Western | (6-19) | JEF-SW 10/6(1) SM; JEF- SRSP 10/7(2) JAW; JEF-SW 10/19(1) FTSW |
| FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tailed | (1-28) | JEF 29 reps(479) |
| SHRIKE, Loggerhead | (1-29) | JEF 37 reps(128) |
| VIREO, White-eyed | (1-28) | JEF 28 reps(103) |
| VIREO, Yellow-throated | (12-12) | JEF-SW 10/12(1) CMN |
| VIREO, Blue-headed | (7-26) | JEF 13 reps(26) |
| VIREO, Warbling | (7-20) | JEF-SW 10/7(1) GP; JEF- SW 10/7(1) JAW; JEF-SW 10/7(2) JHH; JEF-SW 10/8(4) JAW; JEF-SW 10/8(5) JHH; JEF-SW 10/16(1) JHH; JEF-SW 10/20(1) JAW |
| VIREO, Philadelphia | (7-22) | JEF-SW 10/7(1) JHH; JEF- SW 10/8(1) JAW; JEF-SW 10/8(2) JHH; JEF-SW 10/18(1) JAW; JEF-SW 10/18(1) JHH; JEF-SW 10/22(1) JHH |
| JAY, Blue | (1-30) | HAI 3 reps(15); JEF 40 reps(250) |
| CROW, American | (1-15) | HAI-SILS 10/1(1) MG; HAI- SILS 10/2(1) MG; HAI-SILS 10/15(9) MG |
| CROW, Fish | (20-20) | JEF-TP 10/20(2) SM |
| CROW, species | (20-30) | JEF 1 rep(1); ORA 1 rep(1) |
| MARTIN, Purple | (20-20) | JEF 10/20(2) SM |
| SWALLOW, Tree | (7-26) | JEF 11 reps(66) |
| SWALLOW, N. Rough-wing. | (19-26) | JEF 8 reps(239) |
| SWALLOW, Bank | (7-12) | JEF-SW 10/7(1) GP; JEF- SW 10/9(1) JHH; JEF-SW 10/12(3) RWBL; JEF-SW 10/12(5) SM |
| SWALLOW, Cliff | (7-9) | JEF-SW 10/7(1) JAW; JEF- SW 10/7(1) JHH; JEF-SW 10/8(1) JHH; JEF-SW 10/9(1) JHH |
| SWALLOW, Cave | (12-12) | JEF-SW 10/12(1) RWBL |
| SWALLOW, Cave/Cliff | (8-26) | JEF-SW 10/8(1) JAW; JEF 10/20(2) SM; JEF-SRSP 10/20(1) JAW; JEF-SW 10/26(1) SM |
| SWALLOW, Barn | (1-26) | JEF 21 reps(164) |
| SWALLOW species | (2-9) | JEF 2 reps(15) |
| CHICKADEE, Carolina | (6-28) | HAI 9 reps(20); JEF 19 reps(22) |
| TITMOUSE, Tufted | (2-31) | HAI 17 reps(64) |
| WREN, Carolina | (20-25) | HAI-SILS 10/25(1) MG; JEF 10/20(1) SM |
| WREN, House | (7-28) | JEF 15 reps(30) |
| WREN, Sedge | (20-28) | JEF 10/20(1) SM; JEF- MCFW 10/28(1) JAW |
| WREN, Marsh | (8-26) | JEF 7 reps(22) |
| GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray | (6-28) | JEF 31 reps(210) |
| KINGLET, Golden-crowned | (23-23) | JEF-SW 10/23(5) JHH |
| KINGLET, Ruby-crowned | (1-28) | HAI 2 reps(2); JEF 29 reps(351) |
| BLUEBIRD, Eastern | (11-24) | HAI-SILS 10/11(5) MG; HAI- SILS 10/14(2) MG; HAI-SILS 10/21(3) MG; JEF 10/24(4) JAW |
| THRUSH, Swainson's | (7-22) | JEF-SW 10/7(1) GP; JEF- SW 10/7(2) JAW; JEF-SW 10/7(3) JHH; JEF-SW 10/22(1) JHH |
| THRUSH, Hermit | (18-27) | HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 8 reps(23) |
| THRUSH, Wood | (6-7) | JEF-SW 10/6(1) SM; JEF- SW 10/7(1) JAW |
| ROBIN, American | (6-14) | JEF 6 reps(35) |
| CATBIRD, Gray | (6-26) | JEF 27 reps(194) |
| MOCKINGBIRD, Northern | (1-29) | HAI 1 rep(5); JEF 44 reps(148) |
| THRASHER, Brown | (1-28) | HAI 1 rep(2); JEF 34 reps(376) |
| STARLING, European | (1-30) | HAI 2 reps(32); JEF 23 reps(725); ORA 1 rep(50) |
| LONGSPUR, Smith's | (5-5) | JEF 10/5(1) CSL (unconfirmed) |
| OVENBIRD | (18-18) | JEF-SW 10/18(1) JAW; JEF- SW 10/18(1) JHH |
| WATERTHRUSH, Northern | (1-20) | JEF 22 reps(43) |
| WARBLER, Black-and-wh. | (6-25) | HAI 1 rep(1); JEF 26 reps(111) |
| WARBLER, Prothonotary | (18-22) | JEF-SW 10/18(1) JAW; JEF- SW 10/18(1) JHH; JEF-SW 10/19(1) FTSW; JEF-SW 10/19(1) FTSW; JEF-SW 10/19(1) FTSW; JEF-SW 10/22(1) JHH |
| WARBLER, Tennessee | (7-26) | JEF 19 reps(50) |
| WARBLER, Orange-crowned | (7-26) | JEF 11 reps(16) |
| WARBLER, Nashville | (7-25) | JEF 24 reps(170) |
| WARBLER, Mourning | (14-16) | JEF-SW 10/14(1) JAW; JEF- SW 10/16(1) JHH |
| WARBLER, Kentucky | (6-6) | JEF-SW 10/6(1) SM |
| YELLOWTHROAT, Common | (1-28) | JEF 32 reps(83) |
| WARBLER, Hooded | (6-25) | JEF 16 reps(47) |
| REDSTART, American | (1-26) | JEF 28 reps(234) |
| PARULA, Northern | (6-26) | JEF 28 reps(130) |
| WARBLER, Magnolia | (1-26) | JEF 27 reps(74) |
| WARBLER, Yellow | (8-13) | JEF-SW 10/8(1) JHH; JEF- SW 10/13(1) JHH |
| WARBLER, Blackpoll | (26-26) | JEF-SW 10/26(1) SM; JEF- SW 10/26(1) JHH; JEF-SW 10/26(1) JAW |
| WARBLER, Black-thr. Blue | (12-17) | JEF-SW 10/12(1) CMN; JEF-SW 10/12(1) JAW; JEF-SW 10/12(1) JHH; JEF-SW 10/12(1) RWBL; JEF-SW 10/12(1) SM; JEF-SW 10/13(1) JHH; JEF-SW 10/17(1) HD |
| WARBLER, Palm | (18-20) | JEF-SW 10/18(1) JHH; JEF- SW 10/20(1) GP; JEF-SW 10/26(3) JHH |
| WARBLER, Pine | (6-27) | HAI 11 reps(11); JEF 6 reps(8) |
| WARBLER, Yellow-rumped | (7-25) | JEF 12 reps(23) |
| WARBLER, Yellow-throated | (6-20) | JEF 10 reps(14) |
| WARBLER, Prairie | (6-13) | JEF 12 reps(14) |

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| WARBLER, Black-thr. Green | (6-26) | JEF 28 reps(146) |
| WARBLER, Canada | (7-19) | JEF 10/7(1) GP; JEF-SW 10/10(1) HD; JEF-SW 10/19(1) FTSW; JEF-SW 10/19(1) FTSW; JEF-SW 10/19(1) FTSW |
| WARBLER, Wilson's | (6-26) | JEF 18 reps(50) |
| CHAT, Yellow-breasted | (7-8) | JEF-SW 10/7(1) JHH; JEF-SW 10/8(1) JAW |
| SPARROW, Chipping | (26-26) | JEF-SW 10/26(1) SM; JEF-TXPT 10/26(1) SM |
| SPARROW, Vesper | (24-24) | JEF 10/24(2) JAW |
| SPARROW, Savannah | (20-29) | JEF 8 reps(93) |
| SPARROW, Nelson's | (12-26) | JEF-TXPT 10/12(6) RWBL; JEF-TXPT 10/26(5) SM |
| SPARROW, Seaside | (8-26) | JEF-MURW 10/8(3) JA; JEF-TXPT 10/12(2) RWBL; JEF-TXPT 10/26(3) SM |
| SPARROW, Song | (20-20) | JEF-MCFW 10/20(1) JAW |
| SPARROW, Lincoln's | (14-23) | JEF-SW 10/14(1) JAW; JEF-SW 10/19(1) FTSW; JEF-SW 10/23(2) JHH |
| SPARROW, Swamp | (12-28) | JEF 8 reps(33) |
| SPARROW, White-throated | (23-31) | HAI 2 reps(3); JEF 3 reps(6) |
| SPARROW, White-crowned | (20-26) | JEF 10/20(3) SM; JEF-SW 10/20(1) GP; JEF-SW 10/23(2) JHH; JEF-TXPT 10/26(2) SM |
| TANAGER, Summer | (6-25) | HAI 2 reps(4); JEF 13 reps(22) |
| TANAGER, Scarlet | (6-9) | JEF-SW 10/6(1) SM; JEF-SW 10/8(3) JHH; JEF-SW 10/9(1) JHH |
| TANAGER, Western | (7-8) | JEF-SW 10/7(1) GP; JEF-SW 10/8(1) JHH |
| CARDINAL, Northern | (1-31) | HAI 26 reps(1580); JEF 29 reps(81) |
| GROSBEAK, Rose-breasted | (7-20) | JEF 9 reps(47) |
| GROSBEAK, Black-headed (Unconfirmed) | (8-8) | JEF-SW 10/8(2) JAW |
| GROSBEAK, Blue | (1-20) | JEF 14 reps(61) |
| BUNTING, Indigo | (6-28) | HAI 2 reps(2); JEF 34 reps(235) |
| BUNTING, Painted | (6-25) | JEF 11 reps(18) |
| TBLACKBIRD, Red-winged | (1-28) | JEF 28 reps(328) |
| MEADOWLARK, Eastern | (14-25) | JEF 5 reps(40) |
| MEADOWLARK species | (11-29) | JEF 4 reps(6) |
| GRACKLE, Common | (2-25) | JEF 21 reps(166) |
| GRACKLE, Boat-tailed | (1-28) | JEF 13 reps(179) |
| GRACKLE, Great-tailed | (1-30) | JEF 27 reps(996); ORA 1 rep(40) |
| GRACKLE, Gt./Boat tailed | (2-20) | JEF 4 reps(13) |
| COWBIRD, Brown-headed | (19-24) | JEF 3 reps(620) |
| BLACKBIRD species | (18-25) | JEF 3 reps(600) |
| ORIOLE, Orchard | (8-10) | JEF-SW 10/8(2) JAW; JEF-SW 10/8(2) JHH; JEF-SW 10/9(2) JHH; JEF-SW 10/10(1) HD |
| ORIOLE, Baltimore | (1-20) | JEF 9 reps(19) |
| FINCH, House | (5-14) | HAI-SILS 10/5(4) MG; JEF-BMT 10/14(2) HJ |
| SPARROW, House | (8-20) | JEF 3 reps(7) |
| Number of Species | | 204 |
| Number of Individuals | | 40378 |

County Abbreviations:

HAI — Hardin; JEF — Jefferson; ORA — Orange

Location Codes

BC — Bridge City; BMT — Beaumont; MCFW — McFaddin NWR; MURW — J. D. Murphree WMA; NEDR — Nederland; SILS — Silsbee; SNDY — Nature Conservancy Sandyland Sanctuary; SRSP — Sea Rim State Park; SW — Sabine Woods; TP — Tyrrell Park incl. Cattail Marsh; TX87 — Texas 87 Pt. Arthur-Sabine Pass-Sea Rim SP; TXPT — Road to former Pilot Station at Texas Point

Observer Abbreviations

CMN — Candy McNamee; CSL — Christine Sliva; DDO — David Dolan; FTSW — Field Trip to Sabine Woods; GP — Greg Page; HD — Howard Davis; HJ — Harrison Jordan; JA — Jim Armacost; JAW — John Whittle; JH — Joe Halbrook; JHH — John H. Haynes; JJW — John and Jana Whittle; MG — Melanie Goetsell; RW — Ron Weeks; RWBL — Ron Weeks and Brad Lrette; SM — Steve Mayes.

Volunteers and Ornithological Science

Twice in the last month, there have been issues discussed in ornithological listservs in which, it is reported, employees in various governmental and quasi-governmental entities have, by implication, questioned the value and even the validity of bird population data collected in various "citizen science" projects.

First, let us recognize that very nearly all bird population data sets covering more than a very few species are the result of citizen science and/or volunteer efforts. (One of the principal exceptions was the series of duck population aerial surveys by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. We understand these are no longer being carried out.)

Any bird population and/or distribution data faces an almost insurmountable challenge if statistical significance is the goal. To average out the vagaries of weather and the resultant habitat conditions requires a very large number of observations over a large number of years. There are probably only two sets of data that have anything approaching the required number of observations over anything approaching a long enough time period. These are the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) database and the Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) database. eBird may begin to approach this in a few years.

Of the two, the BBS data was collected using a much more rigorously standardized protocol – 3 minute counts spaced one-half mile apart run starting at a specified time, and run within a relatively narrow range of dates. But even the accompanying weather requirements only define the acceptable weather on the actual day the count is conducted, and the surveys are limited to drivable roads. Nevertheless, with upwards of 50 years of data for some routes, statistically significant conclusions can be drawn.

The CBC data is collected on a much less restrictive protocol, but involves a much larger data set, collected over periods of up to 100 years. However, analysis of the data using "party hours" as the base for observational effort allows useful analyses to be performed.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings of each set, we believe the results are likely to be far more accurate than any broad surveys compiled by paid observers even under the direction of ornithologists. At best, these observers are likely to be students, whose experience in bird identification is limited to one or two single semester courses. Avocational birders are likely to be much more experienced in bird identification, and much better motivated to ensure accuracy. Both the CBC and e-Bird make a significant effort to ensure that data reported on species that are rare for the location and time of year are reviewed, and dubious data either excluded or flagged.

While we do not, however, suggest that data collected on a single species or a small number of species in a professional ornithological study is likely to be questionable, we do suggest that the citizen science databases contain almost the only broad scale data on most species. We need to use those databases – they are the best available.

John A. Whittle

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and are not necessarily those of Golden Triangle Audubon.

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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..>