

# The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

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Vol. 20 No. 4

April 2014

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## Membership Meeting Thursday April 17, 2014 7:00 p.m. Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont

**Speaker: Sandy Komito**

Sandy Komito began birding at the age of eight but admits to not beginning keeping serious records until age eleven. During the eighties and nineties, he was the most traveled birder in North America, and regularly recorded more than 500 bird species per year, with two of the years seeing over 600 and two others seeing more than 700.

In 1987, he set the American Birding Association (ABA) record for the most species seen in a single year with 722. This was while he was employed full time! After retiring from business in 1992, he often thought about what he might have done to improve on the 1987 record. The year 1998 was an El Niño year and, in addition, access to the Aleutian Island of Attu was about to be cut off. So, in 1998, he spent 270 days away from home, and logged 275,000 miles, nearly 80 percent by air. By the end of the year, he had seen 745 species, and four others that had not, at the time, been accepted by state Rare Bird Committees, or by ABA. Over the next several years, three of these sightings were accepted bringing the total to 748.

He has written books about each of the two Big Years, the one about the latter being "I Came, I Saw, I Counted." The movie "The Big Year" was (very loosely and not always accurately) based on this same year. He often comes to our area to bird during spring migration, as he did during each of his big years and always includes Sabine Woods in his itinerary.

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.

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Issue number 206

## Golden Triangle Audubon Society

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

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#### The Brown Pelican is

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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. Changes will always be posted on the web site at [www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://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](mailto:sgmayes@hotmail.com)*

**March-April: Yellow Rail Walks at Anahuac NWR.** Join birding expert David Sarkozi for a chance to view Yellow Rails in addition to other rails and species. Meet at the Visitor Information Station just inside the gate at the Refuge. Boots and insect repellent strongly advised.

**Saturday March 29; 7 am and 4 pm**

**Saturday April 5; 7 am and 4 pm**

**Sunday April 6; 7 am and 4 pm**

**Sunday April 13; 7 am and 4 pm**

**Saturday April 19; 7 am and 4 pm**

**Sunday April 20; 7 am and 4 pm**

**Thursday April 17, 2014. Membership Meeting.** Details on p. 1.

## Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank Edra Bogucki, Mary Carter, Linda Davis, Sherry Gibson, Jean Hollingsworth, Carol Lynn and Andy Loker, Lynn Otto, Gail Slocum and Harlan Stewart, for bringing refreshments in January. **We need volunteers to bring items for the April meeting and all subsequent spring 2014 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 Jana Whittle at (409) 722-4193 (or email her at [janafw@aol.com](mailto:janafw@aol.com)) **as far in advance as possible.** Please help if you can!

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

This trip will seek Neotropical migrants at the height of spring

migration, and involves relatively easy walking on the trails at Sabine Woods to look for migrant songbirds, although another option is to sit at the drip and wait for the birds to come to you. However, Hurricane Ike completely destroyed the boardwalks, and the trails may be muddy and slippery if it has rained in the prior day or two. Armadillos are active, so there may be holes to avoid! There is a \$5 sanctuary pass donation at Sabine Woods for those who are not members of Golden Triangle Audubon or Texas Ornithological Society. This field trip is especially suited for not-very-experienced birders.

Bring insect repellent. Most participants will bring lunch. Facilities in Sabine Pass are limited, although gasoline and limited food are now available.

Birding in late April can be exciting. However, we cannot promise anything, as the number of birds in the coastal woodlots is highly dependent on the weather conditions over the Gulf. Immediately after a cold front passes and the following day are usually considered to be among the most likely days to have a good concentration of migrants at favored coastal locations.

We will assemble at the entrance to Sabine Woods at 7:30 a.m. The wooded area is only 10-15 acres, and you should be able to find the group if you are late.

At Sabine Woods, there is a small parking area, with additional parking improvised using the roadside verges. Portable toilets are available.

Sabine Woods is on the north side of Highway 87, 4.1 miles west of the stop sign in Sabine Pass. Take Highway 87 from Port Arthur to Sabine Pass, turn right at the stop sign, and go 4.1 miles.



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](http://www.earthshare-texas.org)

## More about our April Speaker

I met Sandy Komito the first time in 1989 when I was taking money up at Boy Scout Woods with Bessie Cornelius. She introduced us and he is just one of those people that you get to see on some years if we end up at the woods at the same time. Other than Boy Scout Woods and Sabine Woods, John and I ran into Sandy hiking down a road in Arizona in 2000. The one time I remember probably over ten years ago, was when he pointed out a Black-throated Gray in the canopy at Sabine Woods. Many people had mis-identified the bird as a Black and White Warbler. People were thrilled to see that bird. That was my first one to see also. He has birded with many of us several times over the years. He has also birded with another excellent birder, Tex Wells, who originally was from Port Arthur and now resides in Michigan, but would fly down to this area to bird Sabine Woods for two weeks near the end of April every year. They had run into each other a lot over the years.

He is very helpful to birders and I appreciate all the help I can get.

If you saw the movie, "The Big Year", he would like to make one thing clear for sure. He loved his wife, Bobbye, who he calls the love of his life, and they were married a little over 50 years before she passed away. She was his best friend and booster. He has three sons and six grandchildren.

He welcomes all questions after the meeting (except politics and religion). Please invite as many people as possible to come and hear one of North America's important birders in our lifetime.

*Jana Whittle*

**Date?** April 17th

**Where?** Tyrrell Park Garden Center  
in Beaumont

**What time?** 6:15 p.m. to eat with us  
or 7:00 p.m. for the meeting

## New Drips at Sabine Woods

We owe a great debt of gratitude to Howard Davis, Gary Kelley and

Harlan Stewart for working to construct two new drips in an area of Sabine Woods that lost its trees and became overgrown after Hurricane Ike. These new drips will be the centerpiece of Rose Ann's Water Feature, named in memory of Rose Ann Jordan and have been designed with photographic opportunities in mind. We will be working on final touches during the work day on March 22, but we will need to let nature take its course in providing appropriate vegetation behind the drips.

## Membership Dues

To simplify our record keeping, all memberships now run from January through December. Membership dues remain at \$15 per year. You may pay at any membership meeting (checks preferred) or use the subscription/membership blank on the back page.

Dues for all members will be for the period ending on December 31. The memberships of new members joining in August or later in the year will extend to the end of the following calendar year. For new members joining National Audubon using the membership blank printed on the back page of each printed issue of the *Brown Pelican*, we receive a rebate of the entire first year's national dues, and no Chapter dues are expected for that first year.

As a reminder, dues are voluntary for National Audubon Society members living in the Chapter's official territory, which is defined by zip codes, but basically covers all of Jefferson, Orange and Hardin Counties and one or two zip codes adjacent to these counties. We do welcome members in other nearby counties!

Your dues cover the cost of printing and mailing the *Brown Pelican* to you, and help fund our other activities. We urge you to help us do more by receiving your *Brown Pelican* as a PDF attached to an email if you do not already. We will continue to post the Newsletter on the GTAS website at [www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org). The typical issue will be less than 500 KB so it is not a large file. Please send an email to [johnawhittle@aol.com](mailto:johnawhittle@aol.com) with your request, including the name we are currently sending the printed copy to, and the email address you want us to use.

## Sponsor our Birdathon

Once again, we will be raising money for Golden Triangle Audubon in our Birdathon. You may be assured that all your contributions will stay close to home as it were. Royce Pendergast will again be joining with me in this year's Spring Birdathon.

A Birdathon is very similar to other "athons" you may be familiar with, such as telethons, walkathons, etc. The idea is for us to start birding at the crack of dawn on a day in mid to late April and make a run from the woods of the Southern Big Thicket through to the coast of east Jefferson County. We again plan to restrict our area to Hardin, Jefferson and Orange counties. We're aiming for at least 120 species. We will pick an exact date guided by the weather forecasts. Our preferred day will be around April 25. We're hoping you will sponsor us at \$1.00 or more, \$0.75, \$0.50, or (or whatever amount you choose) per bird species. A flat donation is also welcome. Please take the time to make a pledge today -- your donation to our Birdathon will be earmarked to support our mission of protecting our natural heritage in Texas by supporting conservation, education and advocacy. As always, Sabine Woods is high on our list of projects. (If you wish, you may earmark your contributions for a specific use.)

Checks should be made out to Golden Triangle Audubon Society and all contributions are, of course, tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. We appreciate all of you who contributed generously last year, and hope you will consider supporting us again. Please contact me at 3015 Nashville Ave, Nederland, TX 77627 or at [johnawhittle@aol.com](mailto:johnawhittle@aol.com) or 409-722-4193 with your pledges and your suggestions.

*John A. Whittle*

## Contributions to the Brown Pelican

Contributions for the Brown Pelican are always welcome, and we would especially welcome more articles on conservation and related issues, particularly those with a local flavor.

## The Audubon Texas Assembly March 2014

Jana Whittle, Christine Sliva and myself represented the Chapter at the Audubon Texas Assembly, held at McKinney Roughs, a Lower Colorado River Authority preserve between Bastrop and Austin March 1 and 2. The purposes of the assembly were to hear about some of National Audubon Society's (NAS) programs of interest and relevance to Texas, to hear about State programs, and to exchange ideas with leaders of the other Texas Chapters.

NAS has long recognized the importance of Latin America to many of our familiar breeding species, many of which spend their winters south of the border, some ranging as far as southern Argentina and Chile. In addition, one Texas Chapter, Bexar Audubon in the Austin area, has for some time been programming in several parts of Mexico, including the Sierra Gorda area of Guanajuato and in Chiapas. Recently, NAS began a renewed push to develop partnerships with conservation organizations in Latin America, focusing initially on adding Bahamas, Belize, Guatemala and Paraguay to complement existing partnerships in selected regions of Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Colombia and Peru.

Water rights in Texas were discussed in several sessions, recognizing that water will continue to be a major concern across all of the state. All major rivers in Texas are oversubscribed – rights exist to take more water for the rivers than actually flows down them. This coupled with the "rule of capture" which allows landowners to take any underground water beneath their property, without any concern for the health of the various aquifers. Surface water belongs to the state and can only be taken by permit.

Iliana Peña, Audubon Texas Director of Conservation, described the various state programs. The Coastal program, in existence for 91 years, is the oldest program in Audubon. The heart of the program is the lease from the General Land Office of a large number of barrier islands, from Galveston Bay south to the Laguna Madre. In cooperation with the Texas Colonial Waterbird Society, censuses of the birds on the islands are conducted, and the database will soon be accessible to all on the web. It is hoped that some funding from the BP Deepwater Horizon funds will be available to help protect the rookery islands. Iliana also described the current status of the Important Bird Areas program in the state.

Other sessions dealt with issues of member recruitment, fund raising, education programs, and engaging local government and peer organizations in partnerships on common causes.

The final session of the assembly was a wide ranging discussion by the Chapter representatives present on the conservation issues they considered most important. Four major issues dominated the session. Feral cats, wind turbines, hydraulic fracturing for oil and gas production ("fracking") and water issues.

As space permits in future issues, we will discuss some of these issues and others that were brought up in more depth.

John A. Whittle

## Birding Classic

Many of you may have met Zachariah Hutchinson last year. He is in his early 20's and was very active in birding during spring migration especially. He and two friends who graduated with him from Northwest Missouri State University, Brandon Stehl and Curtis Twellman, competed in the Great Texas Birding Classic last year and they didn't do as well as they expected because when they were down in the Corpus area, there was a fallout and they spent a little too much time there. But hey, it could have been their possible one and only true fall out that they will ever see and I don't blame them a bit.

In participating in 2013, they traveled 3500 miles from Big Bend National Park to Sabine Woods. During their five day adventure they tallied 277 species of birds. This was good enough for third place in the tournament. They are excited to participate again in the 2014 GTBC and are hoping to raise more money for the conservation grants, as well as representing the Golden Triangle Audubon Society and the other organizations who are helping to sponsor their team. On a personal note from Zach: "Thank you all so much for the encouragement and hard earned dollars to help us participate in this event. I deeply miss the GTAS and wish all of you great health and birding!"

Zach is now working in Casper, Wyoming at the Science Zone. He also has been involved with the education part of their local Audubon chapter trying to encourage school and youth participation in conservation effort. Zach will leave Casper on April 17th to meet his friends to start the Birding Classic.

At our March meeting we passed the hat again for them and we took up some money to help them pay for gas again like we did last year. They do the biggest trip in the Birding Classic, starting with Big Bend, etc. He emailed me and said they truly plan on seeing 300 bird species this year. He said he hopes the weather stinks while they are doing the classic so that the birding will be good. I think he learned about that at the fallout last year especially,

It is so good for all of us to encourage younger birders to try and seek out birds to practice and hone their birding skills. Thank you to all the people who gave money for them to accomplish their mission this year. If you would like to make a donation and were not at the meeting in March, please mail it to me and I will get it to him.

Jana Whittle  
3015 Nashville Avenue. Nederland, Texas

## Golden Triangle Audubon is now on Facebook

Thanks to Kelley Sampeck, Golden Triangle Audubon has its own Facebook page. The page will include bird reports from the Golden Triangle area, meeting, field trip and other birding event announcements, and pictures. Simply go to <http://www.facebook.com/GoldenTriangleAudubon/> and click the "Like" button to follow. Once you have "liked" the page, any posts to the page will show up in your newsfeed, and you will be able to post comments and pictures to the page. If you do not have Facebook but would like to send in bird reports/alerts for the page, you may e-mail Kelley at kpeck2487@gmail.com

# Bird Sightings – February 2014

As we discussed in last month's issue, we have changed the method of compilation and the format of this section, a change that was made necessary by the increasing number of reports that are becoming available, especially on eBird. We encourage all of our regular contributors to enter their sightings into eBird going forward. We will use all reports available to us so if you do not enter your sightings into eBird, please continue to send those of rare birds to us (johnawhittle@aol.com) by the 15th of the month following. The data entry system in eBird is now quite good.

eBird is provided and run by Cornell Lab of Ornithology as a service to the ornithological community. It was started in 2002 in association with National Audubon Society. Support has been provided by the National Science Foundation, numerous state and local Audubon entities, and several charitable foundations. There are numerous affiliated groups both in the United States and abroad, and a full list can be viewed at [www.ebird.org/content/ebird/about/affiliates/](http://www.ebird.org/content/ebird/about/affiliates/)

In this section of the Newsletter, we now record only the rare and unusual birds reported during the month. To some extent we use our judgment on what constitutes rare or unusual. We are working to formalize this for future issues, probably limiting the report to birds shown as rare or very rare on the local checklists, but we will also mention any particularly high numbers and even expected birds that were not seen, as well as any sightings that may be of special interest for reasons other than those mentioned. We envisage that "rarity" will be defined relative to the month as a whole for winter and summer records, but by the week for March through May and August through October or November. The format this month is still somewhat experimental and we can

tweak it if you have any suggestions to make it better.

We have reviewed eBird and other submitted records for February for the Texas counties we have always covered – Angelina, Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, Newton, Orange, Sabine, San Augustine and Tyler. We also looked at, more selectively, records for nearby counties or parts of counties that are easily accessible to and often banded by birders in our core Golden Triangle Audubon area. These are Chambers, Galveston (High Island and Bolivar Peninsula only) and Liberty counties in Texas, and Calcasieu and Cameron Parishes (both west of the Calcasieu River only) in Louisiana. We will report only very rare species from these additional counties during spring and fall migration. Sightings of excitingly rare species will not be delayed until the issue that they would normally appear in, but will be reported if we have the information when we close for press.

In due course, we intend to use the upload options to enter our personal records from prior years into the eBird system. This will necessarily take some preparation, and will not happen immediately! However, if we are successful in creating a program that will convert the existing database files into a format that will upload directly into eBird, and we currently see no major barrier to doing that, then it will eventually be possible to provide you with files of your prior contributions in such format. We can also explore the possibility of using a generic Golden Triangle Audubon account in eBird to upload some of the records in our database into the system. But we would much rather help you upload them into your own account!

The format of the listing is Species – Date – County-more precise location if available – (number) – Observer(s)

Fulv. Whistling-Duck	Feb 16	CHA-Anahuac NWR (1) MC	Rufous Hummingbird	Three all month JEF-Nederland JJW
Cackling Goose	Feb 22	JEF-Cattail Marsh (1) GTASFT		Three all month JEF-Nederland HS
	Feb 3	JEF-Big Hill Rd (6) RHRC		One all month JEF-Beaumont HJ
	Feb 10	JEF-Big Hill Rd (6) RHRC		Two all month JEF-Beaumont Steve Kuritz
Black Scoter	Feb 17	JEF-Big Hill Rd (6) RHRC	Rufous/Allen's Hummingb.	One all month JEF-Nederland SM
	Feb 15	CAM-Offshore (2) Paul Conover		Two all month JEF-Beaumont Steve Kuritz
Horned Grebe	Feb 24	CAM-Holly Beach (1) Jay Huner	White-eyed Vireo	Feb 15 LIB (1) John Benzon and Gary Holmes
Glossy Ibis	Feb 8	JEF-Pleasure Is (55) JAW	Purple Martin	Feb 8 JEF-Pilot Stn Rd (1) JHH, SM
	Feb 22	JEF-Cattail Marsh (1) GTASFT	White-breasted Nuthatch	Feb 15 TYL (1) Amy Kocurek
	Feb 28	JEF-Cattail Marsh (1) Ken Hartman	Wood Thrush	Feb 17 GAL-Smith Oaks (1) Nancy Reinhart
Ferruginous Hawk	Feb 1	CAM-LA82 W of Holly Beach	Black-and-wh. Warbler	Feb 24 CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Jay Huner
		Ashley Peale and Shawn Kurtzman	Louisiana Waterthrush	Feb 27 JEF-Sabine Woods (3) JHH
Peregrine Falcon	Feb 3	JEF-Big Hill Rd (1) RHRC	Spotted Towhee	Feb 27 JEF-Sabine Woods (1) JHH
	Feb 6	GAL-Smith Oaks (1) Winnie Burkett and Mark Herse	Feb 1 JEF-Old Sabine Cemetery (1) JHH	
	Feb 8	GAL-Rollover Pass (1) RW	Spotted Towhee	Feb 8 JEF-Old Sabine Cemetery (1) JHH, SM, JAW
	Feb 14	GAL-Bolivar Flats (1) Winnie Burkett	Rusty Blackbird	Feb 16 SAB (14) Phyllis Enright
	Feb 26	GAL-Bolivar Flats (1) Wade and Melissa Rowley	Brewer's Blackbird	Feb 14 JAS-Martin Dies SP (20) Dan Lynch
Whimbrel	Feb 17	JEF-Sea RIM SP (1) Chris Runk		
	Feb 19	JEF-Sea RIM SP (1) Chris Runk		
Stilt Sandpiper	Feb 28	JEF-Cattail Marsh (6) Ken Hartman		
Lsr. Black-back Gull	Feb 17	ORA-Bailey's (2) SM		
	Feb 20	ORA-Bailey's (1) JHH		
Pomerine Jaeger	Feb 24	CAM-Holly Beach (2) Jay Huner		
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	Three all month JEF-Nederland JJW			
Black-chin. Hummingbird	One all month JEF-Nederland HS			
Broad-tailed Hummingbird	Three (?) all month JEF-Nederland JJW			
	One Feb 18 and 19 JEF-Nederland JJW			

## Abbreviations used

CAM – Cameron Parish, LA; CHA – Chambers County; GAL – Galveston County; GTASFT – Golden Triangle Audubon Field trip; HAI – Hardin County; HJ – Harrison Jordan; HS – Harlan Stewart; JAS – Jasper County; JAW – John Whittle; JEF – Jefferson County; JHH – John Haynes; JJW – Jana and John Whittle;; MC – Michael Cooper; ORA – Orange County; RHRC – Rene Hebert and Rita Czek; RW – Ron Weeks; SAB – Sabine County, SM – Steve Mayes.

## The Winter Hummingbird Season

By the time you read this, migrant Ruby-throated Hummingbirds will be passing through in significant numbers. So it appears appropriate to review what this winter season has brought us. A few years ago, the conventional wisdom was that with the exception of a very few Rufous Hummingbirds along the immediate Gulf coast, all hummingbirds left the United States in winter. A variety of western hummingbirds were often found on the Freeport, Texas Christmas Count in mid-December, but there were few reports later in the winter, and it was not clear whether these birds stayed all winter or moved further south. However, after a good number of hummingbird aficionados, particularly in the Baton Rouge and New Orleans areas, began planting winter-flowering plants that appeal to hummingbirds and providing feeders throughout the winter, hummingbirds certainly over-wintered in those yards. The vast majority were Rufous Hummingbirds, but over the years other species began to join them. Some Buff-bellied Hummingbirds came up from the Rio Grande Valley, and Black-chinned, Broad-tailed, Calliope and once in a while even an Anna's Hummingbird came in from the west. Some Ruby-throated Hummingbirds also overwintered, but there was always a suspicion that these Ruby-throats were slightly impaired in a manner that dissuaded them from making a longer flight south. In fact, the conventional wisdom was that a wintering *Archilochus* hummingbird was more likely to be a Black-chinned than a Ruby-throated. In addition, along with greater recognition of the existence of two populations of Allen's Hummingbird, one migratory, the other not, came the discovery from careful examination of hummingbirds captured for banding that there were a very few Allen's Hummingbirds in the mix. The default identification of hummingbirds as Rufous ceased and the new terminology of Rufous/Allen's became standard for all birds not having a rufous back and not either captured for banding and examined or exceptionally well photographed in the tail area. *Selasphorus* species was a term also used, but it is usually possible to visually determine whether a particular bird is or is not a Broad-tailed and certainly whether it is or is not a Calliope Hummingbird (recently merged into the *Selasphorus* genus).

In the Golden Triangle area, every now and again, a Buff-bellied Hummingbird spent most of the winter and occasionally Rufous (or more accurately Rufous/Allen's) were seen. However, in recent years, providing a hummingbird friendly environment of flowers and feeders has shown that we can host all the other species as well. In fact, most local yards that are hummingbird friendly have been attracting multiple hummingbirds. It is relatively simple to keep track of hummingbirds in a yard if there are only one or two, but as the number increases, it becomes much more difficult. In fact, two of the female Rufous Hummingbirds in our yard this winter are so similar in facial and other markings that we would probably still not be counting two separate birds if they had not both been captured and banded. One good tool to use is to photograph the hummingbirds at feeders or perches. With newer cameras, this is less difficult than it used to be, and it allows

the markings, particularly on the throat and face to be studied and compared at leisure instead of only for a fraction of a second. However, this can be complicated because most hummingbirds molt on the wintering grounds, and thus birds seen here change over time. We have observed the gorget development process, which can be surprisingly fast, on a number of these hummingbirds. Nevertheless, the turnover of birds as detailed below is somewhat surprising. Even in winter, if there are multiple hummingbirds present, it is important to have multiple feeders, and place them out of sight of others to the extent possible, otherwise one hummingbird will attempt to monopolize all the feeder that can be seen from a vantage point. We discovered another issue that we did not expect. Orange-crowned Warblers and, to a lesser extent, House Finches quickly develop a sweet tooth when there are feeders around. We knew we had several Orange-crowned Warblers, but Sumita Prasad captured no fewer than seven in hummingbird traps in February. And, since bands on Orange-crowned Warblers, unlike those on hummingbirds, can be easily seen when they are perched, we know that there were at least two more Orange-crowned that were not captured. We have also discovered that it is difficult to pin down when birds that stay beyond the middle of March (which can be most birds that wintered) because increasing numbers of Ruby-throats start showing up at feeders and even keeping the former dominators of the feeders away. By mid-March, there are also spring flowers blooming in our area, and the hummingbirds become less dependent on feeders.

Here is, to the best of our current knowledge, a brief summary of the hummingbirds we know about from this winter season. At the Whittle house, we had a female Buff-bellied Hummingbird, thought to be a returning bird from the previous two winters from October 31 to January 28, and a second Buff-bellied, very sporadic, from about December 26 to sometime before January 28. The next bird to show up was an immature male Broad-tailed Hummingbird, which arrived on November 22, and was last seen February 18. A Rufous/Allen's appeared on November 25 only. An immature male Ruby-throat was seen from December 6 to December 16. A female Ruby-throat was seen on December 7, and either it or very similar bird was present from January 17 until mid-March at least. A female Rufous (later captured and banded) that appeared first on December 22 was still being seen mid-March. Female Rufous Hummingbirds that were first observed on January 16 and January 17, and banded on February 15, continued through at least March 12 and March 7 respectively. Two male Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, first observed January 16 and January 24 patronized the feeders at least through February 14 and March 4. An apparent Broad-tailed Hummingbird, with a somewhat Calliope-like gorget, appeared on February 22 and continued through March 13. An immature male Ruby-throat was first observed January 17, and an adult male on January 21. Both almost certainly stayed through at least mid-March, after which it was essentially impossible to visually identify them among the increasing numbers of spring migrant Ruby-throats. A female Rufous/Allen's seen

February 18 and 19 may be yet another bird and it was photographed through March 9. Another female Rufous/Allen's was seen March 5 only, and yet another March 9 through 14 at least. This totals at least 17 different birds over the course of the winter so far. Thanks are due to Harlan Stewart for reviewing photographs and identifying the individual birds.

Harlan Stewart in Nederland had a Buff-bellied Hummingbird from November 9 to December 25. Three immature female Rufous which arrived 23 November, 31 December and January 5 and were still being seen recently. Three Rufous/Allen's were brief visitors in November; one November 7-10, one November 10 only and another November 24 only. One other immature female Rufous was seen from December 7 through December 25. Another immature female was seen December 31 only, and a female Rufous/Allen's was seen January 25 only. Another was seen March 4 and 14. Those shown as Rufous were identified from photographs of the spread tails, and one was additionally captured and banded. A female Black-chinned was present since December 22 through February 16 at least. Probably at least twelve different birds! Presumably migrant Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were first seen March 16.

Harrison Jordan in Beaumont has had two Rufous Hummingbirds, one a very nice male. One has been present since before September, and the other since before December. John Mariani in Lumberton has had a female Ruby-throat since about December 6. Steve Mayes in Nederland has a female Rufous/Allen's first observed December 6. Steve Kuritz has two male Rufous Hummingbirds, one being first seen mid-December and the other mid-January. One of these birds left around March 20, and the other was still present at the time of writing (March 25). He also had two female plumaged Rufous/Allen's Hummingbirds, both first seen early January. One was last seen around March 20 and the other was still present. And we know that Kathi Orgeron put up a feeder in Fannett after watching the banding on February 15 and within an hour had a male Rufous Hummingbird visit it!

All of this totals as many as 37 probably different birds.

*Harlan Stewart and John A. Whittle*

## Recent Bird Sightings

On March 24, there was an amazing show of migrants at Sabine Woods, especially for so early in the season. We believe 14 warbler species and four Vireo species were seen. There were Hooded Warblers, overwhelmingly males, everywhere, with estimates of the total number present in the 50-75 range. Northern Parulas were also plentiful, and the more than a dozen Worm-eating Warblers was more than any of us had seen before on a March day. Yellow-throated Warblers were again uncharacteristically feeding near or on the ground, especially in the recently brush hogged areas. Black-and-white Warblers were also numerous, and there were several Louisiana Waterthrushes. In smaller numbers, and mostly a little early, were Blue-winged, Black-throated Green, Prothonotary, Tennessee and one or two rather elusive Kentucky Warblers.

There were many, many Yellow-throated Vireos, a good number of White-eyed, perhaps three or four Red-eyed and

one Blue-headed. At least three Wood Thrushes were around, but only one Great Crested Flycatcher. Many birds stayed overnight, but apart from about 10 more Prothonotary Warblers, there were few additional birds.

## Report on Sabine Woods Work Day March 22, 2014

We accomplished everything that we needed in the way of maintenance and we should be in good shape for the critical weeks of spring migration. In addition to mowing all the trails and the meadow areas we keep cleared, and trimming the bushes along the sides of the trails, and we dealt with one fallen tree. We also did a lot of work on the new drip area, to be known as Rose Ann's Water Feature in memory of Rose Ann Jordan, installed five additional benches, two at the new drip, and three others in popular areas of the Woods to honor Sandy Komito and in memory of Rose Ann Jordan and Bob Madrulli. We installed a satellite image/map to help orient and guide visitors, and numerous other small items. We thank Andy Allen and Dale Benoit for making the five new benches.

During the winter, we had some heavy brush hogging done in the northern part of the sanctuary. In retrospect, we recognize we had let this become much too overgrown, and we will do our best not to let this happen again. The area had become a *Baccharis* thicket, and was being relatively little used by birds. Access to the north section is now much easier, and the northwest pond is easily accessible again. McCartney Rose continues to be a problem, but regular mowing in appropriate areas is helping control this invasive species.

Interestingly enough, there are six medium sized alligators in the main pond at present. From time to time in the past, we have had a few, usually small, alligators but this is probably the most we have seen. We seriously doubt there is enough food in the pond for that many alligators, and they will likely move on shortly. We believe they will most likely go northwest to a series of ponds that are about 3/10th of a mile away, but they could head south across Highway 87 to Texas Point NWR, where there are usually ponds about 2/10th of a mile away.

Those who birded after we completed the work did find some migrants. There were Louisiana Waterthrushes, a Black-and White Warblers, a nice male Hooded Warbler, which eventually cooperated and fed in an open area, and a White-eyed Vireo or two. Wintering species were dominated by a very large number of Yellow-rumped Warblers, but with a Gray Catbird, several Brown Thrashers, one or two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and a good number of White-throated Sparrows.

On Behalf of Texas Ornithological Society and Golden Triangle Audubon Society we thank everyone who helped on or before the Work Day: Andy Allen, Jessica Barry, Dale Benoit, John Haynes, Harrison Jordan, Gary Kelley, Randy Lewis, Steve Mayes, Sally and Chuck Moffet, Dana Nelson, Daniel Reed, Sherrie Roden, Christine Sliva, Kathy Smartt, Jimmy Lee Smartt, Harlan Stewart, and Jana Whittle.

*John Whittle*

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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](http://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://birdingonthenet.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..>