

# The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

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Vol. 20 No. 10

October 2014

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**Membership Meeting**  
**Thursday October 16, 2014 7:00 p.m.**  
**Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont**

**Birding with Your Hand Held Smart Phone Apps**

**David Sarkozi**

This program will give advice on choosing from the many smart phone apps available to make birding more fun and more productive, and explore what's available to make your birding easier.

David is a very active Texas birder. He serves as Secretary of the Texas Ornithological Society, oversees the Texbirds listserv, and is active with many other Texas birding groups. He is co-compiler with Steve Mayes of the Bolivar Peninsula Christmas Bird count. He works for the University of Houston providing computer support for its police department.

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.

## Audubon's New Birds and Climate Study

On September 9, National Audubon released an important new study on the effects of climate change on birds. Using Christmas Bird Count and Breeding Bird Survey data as well as historical climate data, the study predicts how 588 species of North American birds will fare as the climate changes. The study is specific and identifies birds which face the greatest struggles to survive. More information from the study can be found on the Audubon Web Site at [climate.audubon.org](http://climate.audubon.org). Meanwhile, we have included on page 3 of this issue a brief article on what you can do to help protect birds.

# The Brown Pelican

Vol. 20, No.10 October 2014  
Issue number 211

## Golden Triangle Audubon Society

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

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(Johnawhittle@aol.com)

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

## Calendar of Events

*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).*

## Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank Linda and Howard Davis, Girish Doshi, Sherrie Roden, Herb and Mary Stafford, and all others who brought refreshments in September. **We need volunteers to bring items for the October meeting to complement the sandwiches that the Port Arthur Convention and Visitors Bureau will be providing.** 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 can just 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. We thank all those who brought or assisted in the purchase of refreshments over the last year or so!

**Thursday October 16. Membership Meeting.** David Sarkozi on Birding with Your Hand Held Smart Phone Apps. Further details on page 1.

**Saturday October 18. Field Trip to Sabine Woods.** Leader Steve Mayes.

Meet at Sabine Woods, which is 4.1 miles west of Sabine Pass on the north side of Highway 87 at 7:30 a.m. or join the trip in progress in the woods later. Waterproof footwear will probably be a good idea, especially if it is at all wet from previous rain or just heavy early morning dew. Bring mosquito repellent just in case. There are few services available in Sabine Pass, but gasoline is

available. The deli is no longer open, so bring drinks and lunch.

The middle of October is towards the end of fall songbird migration, but often brings a good variety of birds. A cold front may drive down the last of the warblers and the first big push of wintering birds. Some of our winter birds may be arriving, and often the woodland species that winter in the Big Thicket overshoot a little at first.

Although the boardwalk was destroyed in Hurricane Ike, the trails are clear and mostly reasonably wide, and although some care is needed to avoid uneven ground, birding Sabine Woods is relatively easy.

**Thursday November 20. Annual Meeting.** We will have our annual pot luck dinner, and conduct our elections.

**Saturday November 22. Field Trip to West Jefferson County.** The area is well known for its birds of prey, its Sandhill Cranes and its sparrows. In wet years, there can be lots of waterfowl also.

Meet at 8 a.m. at the intersection of FM365 and Johnson Road (on the "north/west" side of Johnson Road at that intersection). From the intersection of Interstate 10 and FM365 in Fannett, proceed along FM365 (towards Nome) for about six miles. Shortly after you emerge out of the woodlands, South China Road goes to the right (east then north) and immediately afterwards, on the left, is Johnson Road. There is a green sign for the G and A Turf Farm on Johnson Road at the intersection. Contact Steve Mayes, [sgmayes@hotmail.com](mailto:sgmayes@hotmail.com), or call 409-722-5807 for further information.



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).

## Annual Meeting

The November Meeting, to be held on November 20, 2014 in the Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont, Texas 77706 starting at 7:00 PM, will be our annual meeting. At this meeting we will conduct our annual elections.

President Gary Kelley's term continued to the end of calendar year 2015. All other officer positions (Vice-president, Treasurer, Secretary, and all At-large Board seats are up for election. President Kelley has appointed a Nominating Committee comprised of John Haynes ([ocelot61@aol.com](mailto:ocelot61@aol.com)), Gary Kelley ([garymke@sbcglobal.net](mailto:garymke@sbcglobal.net)), Steve Mayes ([sgmayes@hotmail.com](mailto:sgmayes@hotmail.com)), Karen McCormick ([macstop@aol.com](mailto:macstop@aol.com)), and Sherrie Roden ([sroden@gt.rr.com](mailto:sroden@gt.rr.com)).

Please contact any member of the Nominating Committee with your suggestions for officers or board members. Nominations from the floor at the Annual Meeting will be in order only if the person so nominated agrees to serve if elected, and so indicates in person if present, or in writing if not.

## 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), use the subscription/membership blank on the back page of the hard copy version or simply mail to us at PO Box 1292, Nederland, Texas 77627.

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 is currently less than 500 KB so it is not a large file, although we are now including added additional materials in the electronic version and plan to include pictures in the future, both of which may increase the file size slightly. 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.

## Color Banded Brown Pelicans

As some of you probably know, we banded 300 Brown Pelican chicks this summer with green plastic bands engraved with three-letter codes (from TAA to TLN), and I'm interested in finding out when and where they disperse away from their natal colonies. I'm hoping to take advantage of interested birders in Texas and Mexico to report sightings of banded juveniles.

I've set up an easy web form for reporting the bands at [projectpelican.weebly.com](http://projectpelican.weebly.com)

*Juliet Lamb*

*PhD Candidate, Clemson University  
<https://sites.google.com/a/g.clemson.edu/jlamb/>*

## What You Can Do to Help Protect Birds

*The science is in. Now Audubon needs your help to ensure birds have a bright future*

Audubon's new science sends a clear message about the serious dangers birds face in a warming world. Protecting them will require both redoubling conservation efforts to safeguard

critical habitat and curbing greenhouse gas emissions. Here are a few important steps you can take:

**Create a Bird-Friendly Yard:** Healthy birds will be better equipped to face the challenges of a warming world. Commit to creating safe spaces for birds in your home and community by using fewer pesticides, letting dead trees stand, installing bird baths, and converting lawns and gardens to native plants. School grounds, parks, vacant lots, and common areas can all be "bird-scaped," too. Learn more [here](#).

**Get Involved With Your Local Important Bird Area:** Protect the places birds need most today and in the future by pitching in with Audubon's IBA program, which identifies and conserves areas that are vital to birds and biodiversity. You can help with IBA restoration, cleanup, citizen science, and field trips. Find Audubon near you to get started.

**Put Birds on Your Community's Agenda:** Begin a conversation with your neighbors, colleagues, and local leaders about why it's important to you to protect your community's birds, and share what you're doing on behalf of birds. Reach more people by writing a letter to your newspaper, speaking at a community event, or visiting a local school.

**Meet With Local Decision Makers:** Share this science with state wildlife agencies, city parks departments, extension services, and other groups that manage our natural resources to illustrate how global warming imperils birds, and ask decision makers how they are planning to address global warming. For more information on how to help decision makers use and integrate Audubon's science, email [climatescience@audubon.org](mailto:climatescience@audubon.org).

**Support Policies That Lower Emissions:** Urge leaders at the local, state, and national levels to enact policies that lower greenhouse gas emissions and support clean energy. Renewable portfolio standards, energy efficiency targets, and other proactive measures reduce emissions and will limit the effects of global warming on birds. Put these policies on your leaders' agendas, and publicly support efforts to make them stick.

*Joel Sartore  
Published Sep 09, 2014  
on Audubon website*

# Field Trip to Smith Point Hawk Watch – 27 September 2014

A few special areas of the world combine perfect geographical, geological and meteorological features to form just the right conditions for channeling and concentrating migrating raptors. Whether it is a mountain pass or an isolated peninsula, some otherwise unremarkable places become most remarkable every fall when the hawk migration begins. Names like Hawk Mountain and Cape May are famous throughout the birding world but many do not know that one of the best hawk watch sites is right here in southeast Texas: Smith Point!

Smith Point is a small spit of land in Chambers County that sits on Trinity Bay. Most species of raptors dislike flying over large bodies of water so as they migrate south in the fall they will hug shorelines when they can. In southeast Texas, this means flying down the eastern shore of Trinity Bay but this leads to a problem -- the raptors eventually hit Smith Point. This is a dead end for the migrating birds and it leaves them with two not very appetizing choices. One, fly over the open water of the bay toward Galveston or Texas City or two, turn around and go back the way they came. Either way, Smith Point is the perfect place for local birders to position themselves in late September to watch the hawks come down Smith Point and make up their minds!

To that end, ten birders from the Golden Triangle Audubon Society stationed themselves on the hawk watch tower at Smith Point to enjoy the show. Accipiters are the early risers of the hawk world and start their flights early. This is because Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks do very little soaring and are less reliant on thermals (rising columns of warm air) than other hawks. Thermals do not start forming until the day heats up some so the soaring hawks usually wait until later in the morning to start their movements. But on this day, the Sharp-shinned Hawks were already zipping overhead in small numbers as the birders arrived. Accipiters do not travel in flocks but small numbers of the little Sharp-shinned Hawks were passing over most of the day. Similar in appearance but larger in size, Cooper's Hawks were also seen on the day though in much smaller numbers. This pair of species can be difficult to tell apart but Smith Point in the fall is the perfect place and time to watch both species passing low overhead and to learn the subtle differences that differentiate them.

A little later, with the thermals heating up, Broad-winged Hawks started to appear. These small Buteos are the stars of the hawk watches in eastern North America as they can appear in huge numbers. On a good day at Smith Point thousands of Broad-winged may pass through providing a spectacular show for any birders present. On past field trips, this has sometimes been the case but for this year ... not so much. Broad-wings were seen with even a few small flocks (called "kettles" in hawk watch lingo) appearing on the day but big numbers were not to be had. Still, all the birders present got great looks at Broad-winged Hawks (mostly immature birds) as they flew near the tower or over the nearby oak mottes.

Another raptor that can appear in large numbers at Smith Point is the Mississippi Kite. A graceful soaring bird that feeds mainly on large insects, Mississippi Kites are increasingly common nesters in southeast Texas but even more common as

migrants. On this day, a small group of kites soared around the tower area for much of the morning giving great looks to all the birders. These were all young birds as most of the adults pass through the area earlier in the fall on their long migration to South America. More Mississippi Kites would turn up later on but, like the Broad-winged Hawks, it was not a day for big numbers.

A few other raptors were seen on the day including an unusually high flying Northern Harrier, a Red-tailed Hawk or two, American Kestrels, one cooperative (and a few less cooperative) Osprey and a couple of distant Peregrine Falcons but it was not one of the mass migration days that Smith Point is known for. Still, other migrating birds were seen including good numbers of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, a few Ruby-throated Hummingbirds at the feeders and Eastern Kingbirds passing overhead. Follow that up with a Reddish Egret and a staked out Red Knot at nearby Robbins Park and it was still an excellent field trip. It may not have been a day of thousands of raptors but there was a steady stream of birds to enjoy and good birding friends to enjoy them with! Many thanks go out to the Candy Abshier Wildlife Management Area at Smith Point, the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and Hawkwatch International for their sponsorship of the Smith Point Hawk Watch. The following species were recorded by the trip leaders:

Blue-winged Teal(35), Neotropic Cormorant(10), American White Pelican(8), Brown Pelican(52), Great Blue Heron(5), Great Egret(12), Snowy Egret(15), Reddish Egret(1), Cattle Egret(10), White Ibis(30), Turkey Vulture(16), Osprey(4), Mississippi Kite(30), Northern Harrier(1), Sharp-shinned Hawk(35), Cooper's Hawk(4), Broad-winged Hawk(30), Red-tailed Hawk(3), Black-bellied Plover(5), Spotted Sandpiper(1), Willet(1), Ruddy Turnstone(11), Red Knot(1), "Peep" sp. (2), Laughing Gull(35), Caspian Tern(2), Forster's Tern(7), Black Skimmer(20), Mourning Dove(10), Ruby-throated Hummingbird(5), Belted Kingfisher(1), Red-bellied Woodpecker(1), Downy Woodpecker(1), American Kestrel(3), Eastern Kingbird(8), Scissor-tailed Flycatcher(1), Loggerhead Shrike(1), Blue Jay(3), Cliff/Cave Swallow(2), Barn Swallow(65), Blue-gray Gnatcatcher(21), Northern Mockingbird(4), European Starling(5), Northern Cardinal(2), Brown-headed Cowbird(10) 45 species.

*Steve Mayes*

*[Ed. Note. This year's Smith Point Hawk Watch has been the most disappointing ever. In August 1,738 raptors were recorded, and in September only 3,740 for a total of 5,478 to the end of September. The previous lowest September total was 10,512. Some telemetry data for Broad-winged Hawks banded and fitted with transmitters at Hawk Mountain in Pennsylvania that flew over Hazel Bazemore nr Corpus Christi suggests that they probably flew slightly north of IH-10 and turned southward only after passing Houston. Based on the numbers seen at Smith Point and the numbers seen at Hazel Bazemore, most Broad-wings stay far enough north as they fly west or WSW along the Gulf Coast to avoid being funneled into the peninsula that leads to Smith Point. Hawks take advantage of winds whenever they can and most years, enough hawks encounter a fairly strong northerly component to the winds and finish up at Smith Point. But not this year!]*

# Bird Sightings – August 2014

In this section of the Newsletter, we now generally limit the report to birds justifiably shown as rare or very rare on the local checklists for the week of the sighting, but we also try to mention any particularly high numbers as well as any sightings that may be of special interest for reasons other than those mentioned.

We have reviewed eBird and other submitted records for the Texas counties we have always covered – Angelina, Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, Newton, Orange, Sabine, San Augustine and Tyler. We use all checklists in eBird that are reasonable in the light of other checklists and reports (if any) for the date and place, and/or where the rarities are supported by documentation or photographs. We also reviewed, looking for very rare or vagrant species only, 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.

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

American Avocet	Aug 4	JEF-Big Hill Rd (1)	Rita Czek
	Aug 9	JEF-TP (1)	TH
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Aug 4	JEF-Big Hill Rd (60)	Rita Czek
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	Aug 7	JEF-SW (1)	JHH
Alder Flycatcher	Aug 13	JEF-SW (1)	JHH
Vermilion Flycatcher	Aug 30	CHA-ANWR (1)	Derek Muschalek
	Aug 31	CHA-ANWR (1)	Devin Hefferon and Travis Mazerall
Great Kiskadee	Aug 31	CHA-J J Mayes (1)	D. Sarkozi, Ron Weeks
Warbling Vireo	Aug 7	JEF-SW (1)	JHH
Cave Swallow	Aug 4	JEF-Big Hill Lake (15)	Rita Czek
	Aug 11	JEF-Big Hill Lake (15)	RHRC
Ovenbird	Aug 31	JEF-SW (1)	JHH, TH
Worm-eating Warbler	Aug 31	CHA-SPHW (1)	Ron Weeks

**Commentary:** August is a difficult month to cover. Many, if not most of the aircraft listed below are migrants that are, by reference to available local checklists, "early" in their southward journey. We hasten to add, however, that the number of list of birds seen available for the fall, and especially for August, is a couple of orders of magnitude less than for the spring. Birding in August can be beset by heat and high insect populations! In reality, it may not be as rare as it might seem for many of these birds to be migrating in the middle of August. In addition, a few birds of shorebird and waterfowl species especially, may not have, for whatever reason, headed north this year. Also, in some species of shorebird, it is not uncommon for many "first summer" birds to remain on the wintering grounds during their first summer. In the case of waterfowl, and less commonly in any species, the possibility that a bird physically incapable of undertaking along migratory flight must always be considered.

September will show a very different picture where most of the "rare" sightings will be of birds that we do not often see, not birds that are merely early or late. In addition, by September, many more birders have emerged out of the air conditioning and more lists are available!

Louisiana Waterthrush	Aug 5	JEF-SW (1)	JHH
Blue-winged Warbler	Aug 13	JEF-SW (1)	JHH
Blackburnian Warbler	Aug 31	JEF-SW (1)	TH
Chestnut-sided Warbler	Aug 31	CHA-SPHW (1)	Ron Weeks
Prairie Warbler	Aug 13	JEF-SW (1)	JHH
	Aug 15	JEF-SW (1)	JHH
	Aug 31	JEF-SW (1)	JHH, TH
Wilson's Warbler	Aug 31	CHA-SPHW (1)	Ron Weeks

**Abbreviations used:** ANWR – Anahuac NWR; CHA – Chambers County; HAI – Hardin County; HJ – Harrison Jordan; HS – Harlan Stewart; JEF – Jefferson County; JHH – John Haynes; ORA - Orange County; RHRC – Rene Hebert and Rita Czek; SM – Steve Mayes; SPHW – Smith Point Hawk Watch; SW – Sabine Woods; TH – Thomas Hellweg; TP – Tyrrell Park incld Cattail Marsh.

## September Highlights So Far

In an attempt to be more up to date, we are summarizing here the sightings of some of the rare birds seen in September that we know of at this point, with a focus on Jefferson County. As we close for press, not all September lists are available, and the regular section next month will have the benefit of all lists and will thus be more comprehensive.

Black-billed Cuckoos are very rare in fall, but there have been two reports in September. Michael Cooper and Thomas Hellweg had one in Sabine Woods on September 6, and they and John Haynes had another there on September 14.

Neil and Joni Cotham saw a *Selasphorus* hummingbird at Sea Rim State Park on September 6. The editor had a Rufous Hummingbird come to a feeder in Nederland on September 9. A photograph with the tail spread was obtained. A male Broad-tailed Hummingbird has been frequenting the feeders at the Whittle house in Nederland since September 23 and was still present as of October 1. This bird has been very flighty,

but the wing whistle is unmistakable! There are still a number of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds around that are competing with it for domination of the feeders.

John Haynes had a Fork-tailed Flycatcher fly over Sabine Woods on September 22, but was unable to relocate it anywhere nearby. There was also an Ash-throated Flycatcher at Sabine Woods on that day.

A Black-throated Gray Warbler was seen and photographed by several observers at Sabine Woods September 11 and 12. Elsewhere in this issue is a report on the Migration Count on September 20 wherein two Black-throated Blue Warblers were found at Sabine Woods by Michael Cooper and Thomas Hellweg, and were seen through September 22. Another was there September 27-28. A Townsend's Warbler was found in Sabine Woods on September 23, but was only seen for about an hour. However, close range video of the bird was obtained.

# Jefferson County Migration Count – 20 September 2014

The fall Jefferson County Migration Count is a county-wide count conducted on the Saturday of the third full weekend in September. This year, that Saturday fell on September 20, almost as late as it can be. The results were abnormal to say the least, and, at present, we are pretty much at a loss to know what was going on. The observers in the northern and western sections of the county, including Beaumont, all remarked on the very low number of birds that were out and about, and the totals that they recorded confirm that impression.

The weather was pleasant; no rain, low cloud or high wind that might have made an impact on the birds we were able to detect. There had been significant rains in the days prior to count day, but that usually results in more birds being seen, not fewer. There are changes in habitat occurring in western Jefferson County, as several large areas that were each owned by one landowner are being broken up into multi-acre residential lots. The new owners often clear much of the underbrush, but this division and clearing has been happening slowly over a multi-year period, and surely does not explain a sudden drop in bird numbers.

One has to be very careful in trying to analyze count results based on a single year, and there are many other factors that come into play. The numbers of a few normally abundant species can greatly influence overall totals. Red-winged Blackbirds and the various grackle species seemed to be very scarce this year; but White Ibis were exceptionally plentiful, but not in enough numbers to counter the blackbird shortage.

The observers are all avid birders, and so they are always interested in the total number of species observed. One hundred and fifty-one species is disappointingly low, and while higher than the 144 species seen in 2009, the first year after Hurricane Ike in 2008, it is one greater than the count in 2003, before either of the recent hurricanes.

There is one observer factor related to this year's count that might have somewhat suppressed the numbers of birds detected. The standard gauge of observer coverage is the party-hour. The total number of hours put in by our parties this year was well within the norms of past years. However, with several of our regular participants out of town on that weekend, the number of observers was down significantly, with many parties this year composed on only one observer. Especially when birding by automobile, as a good portion of our count necessarily is, two or more observers will always see more birds than one observer on the same route.

There are probably four distinct classes of birds in the area in September. There are the birds that are truly resident, and do not migrate at all. There are probably far fewer of these than one might think, as the birds of a species that we see here in winter are not necessarily the same birds that we see breeding in the summer. What looks on the range map as merely a contraction in winter may well be hiding the fact that all the birds of the species move south in winter, with the incoming birds replacing those that left for further south.

Undoubtedly, there are some truly resident species, and Northern Cardinals and Northern Mockingbirds might well be two of them. More obviously, there are birds that come to Southeast Texas to breed, and leave in the winter. And, of

course, there are species that spend the winter here and go north to breed.

While the timing of migration is generally believed to be most strongly influenced by the so-called photoperiod, the length of night and day, this is clearly not the only factor, otherwise we would not have years when the bulk of migration of a given species occurs either earlier or later than usual. Possible influences are the availability of food, which often depends on temperature, the availability of water and wetlands (which is just a surrogate for food availability in most cases), and the weather more generally. One possibility that could potentially greatly influence local bird numbers in September would be a year in which the breeding (summer) birds leave early, and the wintering birds are late in coming south. The count results over the years point to one or two species in which this happens regularly, leaving a period in September when the species is very hard to find locally. The Eastern Meadowlark is a clear example of this.

In a typical year, there are few migratory waterfowl in the area on count day, excepting only Blue-winged Teal, and this year was no exception. The Blue-winged Teal total was on the low side, although all reports from the breeding ground suggested a good breeding season. We suspect the Gadwall seen at Cattail Marsh was one that spent the summer there. A few Northern Shovelers on the other hand are to be expected and this year's three is actually low. We would have liked to have found more Mottled Ducks, but perhaps there was more available habitat in the aftermath of the early September rains.

We have come to look forward to seeing Wood Storks each fall, but although some have been seen in the usual place along Highway 90 near the Liberty County line, there were none there on count day. Nowadays, fall brings with it large flocks of migrating Anhingas, but not every day. One large flock was seen over Beaumont this year.

The Brown Pelican population remains healthy, but no American White Pelicans had made it down to the area by count day. Egret numbers, both Great and Snowy, were somewhat low, but Little Blue and Tricolored Herons were seen in near normal numbers. We missed Reddish Egret last year, but found two this year, as is becoming about normal. Green Herons were a little low, but both Yellow-crowned and Black-crowned were very low. As noted above, there were many more White Ibis than usual in several large flocks.

It was nice to see some Mississippi Kites this year, after two fall counts without any. Perhaps the least expected raptor was an adult Bald Eagle, seen in a ploughed field full of White Ibis on McDermund Road in the western part of the county. We have become accustomed to seeing the eagles that nest in Cattail Marsh from December through April each year, but this is the first time we have seen one in September. Many of the other wintering raptors were just beginning to arrive by count day, and in the case of many species, we sometimes see one or two, other times we don't find any. This year, we actually did quite well, finding Northern Harriers, Sharp-shinned Hawks and a Cooper's Hawk as well as Red-tailed Hawk. Both Crested Caracara and Swainson's Hawks have established themselves as breeding species in the area over the past decade, and both seem to be increasing in number. The

Caracaras stay year round, while Swainson's Hawks migrate deep into South America each winter. Given the late date of the count, it was surprising to find only one American Kestrel.

Rails and Gallinules were a little disappointing with only Clapper Rails in anything near normal numbers. No Purple Gallinules remained on count day, but, by the standard of recent years, a good number of American Coots were already present.

On the beach, there were normal numbers of all the small plovers except Wilson's. It was disappointing not to find any after three consecutive counts in which we found the species.

The fairly wet conditions in most of the western part of the county many well have resulted in many shorebirds being in places where we could not go. Over the past few years, American Avocets have become much easier to find in September. It seems likely that a significant number of non-breedingers spend the summer in our area. The absence of both Long-billed Curlew and Marbled Godwit after three years of seeing both species was unexpected. However, neither species has ever been particularly easy to find in Jefferson County. Most of the expected sandpiper and related species were present in normal numbers, but it was very disappointing not to find any of either species of dowitcher.

Gulls and terns have not always been easy to find in the aftermath of recent hurricanes, but the absence of any lingering Least Terns was the only noteworthy miss.

Mourning Doves were found in somewhat low numbers, but White-winged Doves set a new high for the count.

The failure to find any Barn Owls was a little disappointing, but Barred Owls were again found. The absence of any Common Nighthawks was very surprising, as they were present along the coast in very good numbers in August and early September.

The count day being quite late in the month lowers expectations for flycatchers, and Least and Yellow-bellied were the only identified *Empidonax*. Eastern Wood-Pewees were numerous, while there was a substantial Scissor-tailed Flycatcher migration on count day. Swallows were not at all numerous in sharp contrast to last year's excellent showing.

Woodpeckers apparently continue to benefit from the dead trees resulting from the hurricanes, and were found in good numbers apart from Pileated, which has always been a little less easy to find in Jefferson County.

Carolina Chickadees and Tufted Titmice were about normal, but Carolina Wrens seem to be on a downward slope. American Robins and Gray Catbirds were about as expected, while Northern Mockingbirds were right in the middle of the normal range. This is important, as the species is probably the best marker species, with relatively stable population, and the normal count indicates that the birds that were there were being detected as normal.

Eighteen warbler species represents a fairly good diverse selection. Pride of place goes to the two male Black-throated Blue Warblers that were found in Sabine Woods during the day, a new species to the count. Finding two Kentucky Warblers was good, as this species is not easy to detect in the fall. Chestnut-sided was another good find.

Tanagers, buntings and grosbeaks are never easy to find in the fall and our results were about average. Indigo Buntings were scarce, and only one Summer Tanager was seen.

We have noted above the low numbers of blackbirds and grackles, but note the first Bronzed Cowbird ever found on this count, although not really unexpected.

More detail of the results, and historical totals from past years have been posted on the Golden Triangle Audubon website at [www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org)

2014 Count Results: WHISTLING-DUCK, Black-bellied (288); WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous (110); DUCK, Wood (4); GADWALL (1); DUCK, Mottled (30); TEAL, Blue-winged (262); SHOVELER, Northern (3); TEAL, Green-winged (2); GREBE, Pied-billed (11); CORMORANT, Neotropic (95); ANHINGA (72); PELICAN, Brown (158); BITTERN, Least (1); HERON, Great Blue (22); EGRET, Great (92); EGRET, Snowy (93); HERON, Little Blue (24); HERON, Tricolored (44); EGRET, Reddish (2); EGRET, Cattle (1392); HERON, Green (17); NIGHT-HERON, Black-crowned (3); NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crowned (3); IBIS, White (2104); IBIS, Glossy (1); IBIS, White-faced (26); IBIS, Plegadis (345); SPOONBILL, Roseate (31); VULTURE, Black (39); VULTURE, Turkey (59); OSPREY (2); KITE, Mississippi (5); EAGLE, Bald (1); HARRIER, Northern (2); HAWK, Sharp-shinned (2); HAWK, Cooper's (1); HAWK, Red-shouldered (8); HAWK, Broad-winged (4); HAWK, Swainson's (5); HAWK, Red-tailed (2); CARACARA, Crested (7); KESTREL, American (1); MERLIN (2); RAIL, Clapper (12); RAIL, King (1); GALLINULE, Common (56); COOT, American (22); PLOVER, Black-bellied (15); PLOVER, Snowy (32); PLOVER, Semipalmented (4); PLOVER, Piping (10); KILLDEER (48); STILT, Black-necked (60); AVOCET, American (58); SANDPIPER, Spotted (6); YELLOWLEGS, Greater (3); WILLET (12); YELLOWLEGS, Lesser (26); TURNSTONE, Ruddy (2); SANDERLING (22); SANDPIPER, Semipalmented (22); SANDPIPER, Western (79); SANDPIPER, Least (65); SANDPIPER, Pectoral (11); GULL, Laughing (812); GULL, Ring-billed (16); TERN, Caspian (5); TERN, Black (250); TERN, Forster's (88); TERN, Royal (46); TERN, Sandwich (1); SKIMMER, Black (4); PIGEON, Rock (194); COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian (31); DOVE, White-winged (169); DOVE, Mourning (269); DOVE, Inca (10); CUCKOO, Yellow-billed (2); OWL, Great Horned (3); OWL, Barred (3); WILL'S-WIDOW, Chuck- (1); SWIFT, Chimney (13); HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-throated (80); KINGFISHER, Belted (3); WOODPECKER, Red-headed (7); WOODPECKER, Golden-fronted (1); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (30); WOODPECKER, Downy (19); WOODPECKER, Pileated (6); WOOD-PEWEE, Eastern (15); FLYCATCHER, Yellow-bellied (3); FLYCATCHER, Least (2); FLYCATCHER, Empidonax (8); FLYCATCHER, Great Crested (13); KINGBIRD, Eastern (30); FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tailed (47); SHRIKE, Loggerhead (63); VIREO, White-eyed (25); VIREO, Yellow-throated (1); VIREO, Red-eyed (15); JAY, Blue (135); CROW, American (6); CROW, Fish (1); SWALLOW, Tree (30); SWALLOW, N. Rough-winged (4); SWALLOW, Cliff (26); SWALLOW, Cliff/Cave (17); SWALLOW, Barn (69); CHICKADEE, Carolina (30); TITMOUSE, Tufted (6); WREN, Carolina (15); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (35); BLUEBIRD, Eastern (13); ROBIN, American (5); CATBIRD, Gray (5); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (249); THRASHER, Brown (5); STARLING, European (517); OVENBIRD (1); WARBLER, Worm-eating (1); WATERTHRUSH, Northern (18); WARBLER, Blue-winged (2); WARBLER, Black-and-white (11); WARBLER, Prothonotary (3); WARBLER, Nashville (1); WARBLER, Kentucky (2); YELLOWTHROAT, Common (2); WARBLER, Hooded (3); REDSTART, American (3); PARULA, Northern (2); WARBLER, Magnolia (3); WARBLER, Yellow (4); WARBLER, Chestnut-sided (1); WARBLER, Black-throated Blue (2); WARBLER, Pine (1); WARBLER, Canada (10); CHAT, Yellow-breasted (2); SPARROW, Seaside (33); TANAGER, Summer (1); CARDINAL, Northern (91); GROSBEAK, Blue (10); BUNTING, Indigo (1); BUNTING, Painted (6); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (192); MEADOWLARK, Eastern (1); GRACKLE, Common (65); GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (45); GRACKLE, Great-tailed (292); COWBIRD, Bronzed (1); COWBIRD, Brown-headed (18); ORIOLE, Baltimore (18); FINCH, House (7); SPARROW, House (193); Total Birds (10441); Number of species (151); Number of Observers (10); Number of Parties (12); Number of Party-Hours (58.69); Party hours on foot (18.22); Miles on foot (11.3); Party-hours by automobile (42.13); Miles by automobile (489.65); Party-hours stationary/feeder watching (not inclnd in totals) (1.033).

Participants 2014: Jessica Barry, Michael Cooper, Linda Davis, Howard Davis, John Haynes, Thomas Hellweg, Harrison Jordan, Steve Mayes, Ken Sztraky, John Whittle.

Golden Triangle Audubon Society  
P. O. Box 1292  
Nederland, Texas 77627-1292

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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..>