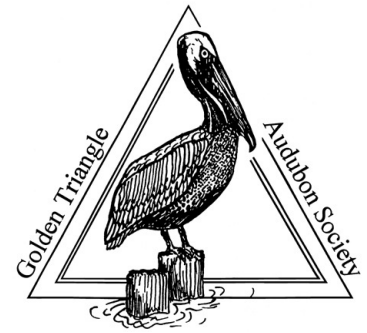


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 21 No. 2

February 2015

**Membership Meeting
Thursday February 19, 2015 7:00 p.m.
Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont**

Dragonflies and Damselflies

**Al Barr
Outreach Coordinator
Jesse Jones Park and Nature Center
Humble, Texas**

Many of us have been birding in some of the wetter local areas, and have noted the variety of dragonflies and damselflies that are present. In his presentation, Al Barr will give us an introduction to these insects, and describe some of those found in our area.

Al Barr grew up on a farm in Kansas and likes to note that he remembers when they first got electricity. He graduated from Colorado State University with a B.S. in Wildlife Management, and has an M.S. in Wildlife Science from Texas A&M University. He taught high school biology and environmental science for 30 years. After retiring, he became Outreach Coordinator at Jesse Jones Park and Nature Center.

Jesse Jones Park and Nature Center is one of about 30 Harris County Precinct 4 parks, and is located north of Houston Intercontinental Airport. on Kenswick Drive north of FM1960.

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

The Brown Pelican

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Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Web Site for more information
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

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Calendar of Events

Important Note: Field Trip notices published here should always be regarded as needing confirmation just before the date. Changes will always be posted on the web site at www.goldentriangleaudubon.org. Confirmation of the location will also normally be available at the Membership Meeting that is usually, but not always, two days prior to each trip, or by contacting Field Trip Committee chair, Steve Mayes at 409-722-5807 or sgmayes@hotmail.com.

Thursday December 4 through February 15. Birds in Art Exhibit.

The Museum of the Gulf Coast in Port Arthur, Texas, invites Golden Triangle Audubon Society members to visit the "Birds in Art," exhibition.

For more information, see the museum's website at www.museumofthegulfcoast.org, email the Museum at bellianse@lamarpa.edu, or call 409-982-7000.

Thursday February 19, 2015. Membership Meeting. Dragonflies and Damselflies. Details on page 1.

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank Gary and Denise Kelley, Jessica Barry, Girish Doshi, Thomas Hellweg, Donna and Paul Monk, Phil Rogers, Gail Slocum, and Mary and Herb Stafford for bringing refreshments in January. **We need volunteers to bring items for the February meeting and all following spring 2015 meetings.** Pick the meeting at which you want to help. 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) **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!

Saturday February 21, 2015. Field Trip to Cattail Marsh and Tyrrell Park. Meet at the parking lot for Cattail Marsh at 8:00 a.m. The parking lot is accessed from the loop road round the main picnic areas in Tyrrell Park in Beaumont. Some birds can be seen with minimal walking, **but the group will probably make a leisurely three-or-so-mile hike round the various cells in the marsh.** If you are unable to walk that far, there will be someone near the entrance to help you identify the birds in the near cells. Walking is on the levees; the main ones are graveled, but some of the interior ones are mowed grass. This will be a good trip for beginning to intermediate birders, as most of the waterfowl and wading birds are relatively easy to study in the open water areas.

Directions to Cattail Marsh.

From the south

Go "north" on US69/96/287 around the south side of Beaumont. Take Texas 124 (west towards Fannett -- left turn under the highway). Travel about a mile to the first light. At the first light, turn left onto Tyrrell Park Road and go about 1/2 mile. Turn left into Tyrrell Park through the nice new arch. Continue past the Garden Center on your left, past the clubhouse for the golf course further along on your right, and proceed about two-thirds of the way round the loop road. The Cattail Marsh parking area is accessed by means of a signed shell road on your right.

From IH-10

Exit at Walden Road on the west side of Beaumont; Go south on Walden Road for about 1/2 mile to the first light. At the light go straight across Highway 124 onto Tyrrell Park Road and follow the directions above.



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 Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge – 18 January 2015

What makes for an ideal field trip? Lots of individual birds to look at? Great species diversity? Rare birds? How about a place that can give you all of these? Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge is that kind of place, so the Golden Triangle Audubon Society scheduled the January field trip for this location hoping for some of those avian highlights. We were not disappointed!

If we are talking about having lots of birds to look at then, at Anahuac, we are talking about waterfowl. Thousands of ducks, geese and other water birds spend the winter at the refuge and are enjoyed by birders and hunters alike. Snow Geese are the most abundant and big flocks were seen on this day including many white and blue forms. Ducks were abundant both flying overhead and in the marsh. Northern Pintail were probably the most abundant but Green-winged Teal and Northern Shoveler were also present in good numbers. Among dabbling ducks Blue-winged Teal, Mallard, Mottled Duck and American Wigeon were present in smaller numbers. Diving ducks were also seen as Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup and Ruddy Ducks were found on the refuge and Redheads were found in a pond just outside.

As far as other water birds go, there were also plenty. Pied-billed Grebes were common and American Coots and Common Gallinule were also seen. Sora and King Rail were only heard while Black-necked Stilt were heard and seen. Huge American White Pelicans and Brown Pelicans were observed along with lots of wading birds like Great Blue Heron, Tricolored Heron, White Ibis and Roseate Spoonbills. The trip was a little short on shorebirds but did include species like Greater Yellowlegs and Killdeer. Both Neotropic Cormorant and Double-crested Cormorant were noted along with Ring-billed Gull and Caspian and Forster's Terns.

The species diversity for the trip list was greatly increased by the raptors and land birds seen by the group as well. White-tailed Kites were common on the day perched and "kiting" over fields while Northern Harriers cruised low over the marsh. Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks stalked small birds. American Kestrels were easy to find while Crested Caracara was a bit tougher. Mourning Doves perched on power lines while Tree Swallows zipped by. House Wrens and Marsh Wrens were found along with the ubiquitous Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Warblers were represented by Orange-crowned Warblers, Yellow-rumps and Common Yellowthroats. Sparrows were also a part of the day with Savannah, Song, Swamp and White-crowned all being tallied. Eastern Phoebes and American Pipits were located by the group along with several Meadowlarks and at least one American Goldfinch.

The real highlights of this trip were the rare birds. It started right at the beginning of the trip with the male Vermilion Flycatcher at the Anahuac NWR welcome station. Vermilions are not that rare in our area but rare enough to be noteworthy plus it's just a beautiful bird! But the good birds just kept coming! Next came a beautiful male Cinnamon Teal in the marsh. Like the Vermilion, it's not that rare but rare enough for birders to take notice. And how about the Bald Eagles? Not so many years ago, any Bald Eagle in the area

would have been outstanding but now they are expected in small numbers but seeing eight to twelve in one day? That's outstanding just about anywhere! But eagles were not the only outstanding raptor in good numbers seen on the day. Three White-tailed Hawks were also located by the group as they soared over fields near the refuge. But even the White-tails were not the rarest raptor seen. An immature Swainson's Hawk was found soaring over the road near the refuge when it should have been enjoying an austral summer in Argentina! Nearby another rarity was located though this one was a stake out bird: Say's Phoebe! This bird had been seen several times along FM 1985 near the entrance to the Skillern Tract of Anahuac during this winter and the group was eventually able to locate this western flycatcher as it perched and foraged from atop some dirt mounds near a work site. But even this was not the rarest bird seen on the trip. That honor would go to a Ross's Goose found flying in a group of Snow Geese over the Skillern Tract. That might not sound rare as Ross's Geese have been an uncommon but increasing member of our local avifauna in recent years but there was something special about this bird. This particular Ross's Goose was a blue morph! Although we are used to seeing blue morph Snow Geese in southeast Texas, blue morph Ross's Geese are very rare.

What more appropriate way would there be for the trip to end than the same way it began – with a beautiful male Vermilion Flycatcher, this one at the Skillern Tract. This little firecracker of a bird capped a day of rare birds, fantastic diversity and huge numbers of individual birds. By any measure, the January field trip to Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge was an unqualified success. There is a reason Anahuac is one of the top birding destinations in North America and a reason the Golden Triangle Audubon Society will keep coming back again and again – great birds!

The following species were recorded by the field trip leaders:

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (12); Greater White-fronted Goose (50); Snow Goose (2858); White Goose (2000); Ross's Goose (21); Gadwall (110); American Wigeon (2); Mallard (2); Mottled Duck (3); Blue-winged Teal (10); Cinnamon Teal (1); Northern Shoveler (625); Northern Pintail (1070); Green-winged Teal (510); Canvasback (21); Redhead (20); Ring-necked Duck (74); Lesser Scaup (15); Duck Species (5000); Pied-billed Grebe (14); Neotropic Cormorant (18); Double-crested Cormorant (1); American White Pelican (35); Brown Pelican (8); American Bittern (2); Great Blue Heron (4); Great Egret (2); Snowy Egret (3); Little Blue Heron (1); Tricolored Heron (1); White Ibis (4); *Plegadis* species Ibis (10); Roseate Spoonbill (4); Black Vulture (4); Turkey Vulture (4); White-tailed Kite (7); Bald Eagle (12); Northern Harrier (8); Sharp-shinned Hawk (1); Cooper's Hawk (1); Swainson's Hawk (1); White-tailed Hawk (3); Red-tailed Hawk (18); Red-tail (Kridler's) Hawk (1); Crested Caracara (1); American Kestrel (10); King Rail (3); Clapper Rail (1); Sora (1); Common Gallinule (19); American Coot (55); Killdeer (15); Black-necked Stilt (1); Greater Yellowlegs (2); Ring-billed Gull (2); Herring Gull (1); Caspian Tern (1); Forster's Tern (8); Mourning Dove (22); Belted Kingfisher (2); Eastern Phoebe (11); Say's Phoebe (1); Vermilion Flycatcher (2); Loggerhead Shrike (4); Tree Swallow (8); House Wren (2); Marsh Wren (1); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (1); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (2); Northern Mockingbird (4); European Starling (60); American Pipit (1); Orange-crowned Warbler (2); Common Yellowthroat (4); Yellow-rumped Warbler (6); Savannah Sparrow (6); Song Sparrow (2); Swamp Sparrow (4); White-crowned Sparrow (2); Northern Cardinal (1); Red-winged Blackbird (27); Meadowlark species (3); Boat-tailed/Great-tailed Grackle (25); Brown-headed Cowbird (5); American Goldfinch (1) *Steve Mayes*

Sea Rim State Park Christmas Bird Count – 3 January 2015

The weather was extremely unkind to this count. Early in the morning, it looked as if the southern end of the then very narrow thunderstorm line would just clip the area. But as the line approached it sucked up lots of moisture from the Gulf, and we had heavy rain for about a four hour period in the middle of the day. Needless the say, this hindered birding significantly, and the very wet conditions made it impossible to survey the interior of Texas Point as we usually do by airboat. All other areas were covered but for those we had not reached in the first three hours or so, the numbers are almost certainly low, as most land birds sheltered from the rain. The best we could do was to cover the interior late in the day on foot from the cattle walk. Overall, our observers did a magnificent job in the circumstances, and we recorded 150 species, the same as last year. Overall bird numbers were quite high, primarily on account of the goose numbers.

Normally, we discuss any possibly emerging trends in bird numbers. This year, for many species that would certainly be misleading, so we have been circumspect in our comments. Particularly, many areas where there are usually flocks of ducks could not be covered, and we would recommend disregarding this count in any analysis of overall duck numbers in the count circle. This would probably apply particularly to Gadwall and Green-winged Teal, as well as Canvasback. However, all the expected duck species were seen, and it is interesting to note that Redhead are becoming regular wintering ducks in the area. This year's Redheads were in the ponds around the Gambusia Trail in Sea Rim SP. Hooded Mergansers were seen in three times recent normal numbers. Common Goldeneye were seen for the first time in several years. Geese were around in large numbers, as they have been throughout the area counties this year. Canada Geese were seen for the first time since 2009.

Hérons don't mind the rain, and the numbers were pretty much normal, except for American Bitterns. Often we struggle to find one or two, and find those usually from the airboat. Covering Fence Lake by pirogue helped this year but others were found basically by the edges of canals and other water bodies for a total of seven. Reddish Egrets were missing again. We almost always see them along the beach in fall, but they seem to retreat (back west?) before count day.

We did very well on raptors in the circumstances. White-tailed Kite numbers were not high as were Red-tailed Hawk numbers, but both these species are unlikely to be active in rain, and may have just not been active during count day.

Rails have been doing quite well recently, and both King and Virginia Rails were found in good numbers. Yellow and Black Rails are difficult to find in the best of conditions, but without the airboat, there was little chance.

The Marbled Godwits were in their usual remote location on the beach near Texas Point, but we did not find any Long-billed Curlews or Whimbrels that have been there in recent years. We did surprisingly well on other shorebird species, including lots of Dowitchers. Perhaps the relatively wet fall, especially the late fall, provided more habitat. There have been a very small number of American Oystercatchers around the Ship Channel near Sabine Pass for the past decade but they (4); FALCON, Peregrine (7); RAIL, Clapper (30); RAIL, King (7); RAIL, Virginia (9); SORA (2); GALLINULE, Common (14); COOT, American

have not always been easy to find. Thanks to the ever increasing power of modern camera lenses, two were detected in a survey photo of birds resting on the opposite shore! All the expected small plovers, Semi-palmated, Piping and Snowy, were found on the Sea Rim Beach, and both Least and Western Sandpipers were present.

Gulls and Terns were normal, with a good number of Bonaparte's Gulls and four Common Terns, a welcome return after several years' absence. Strangely, no Caspian Terns were found on count day, although they were around next day.

White-winged and Mourning Doves were in good numbers, probably because they were perched high out of the wet conditions! A small number of Inca Doves were reported, but Eurasian Collared-Doves were likely sheltering somewhere, as we found only one.

Great Horned Owls were numerous despite the conditions, but no Barn Owl was found on count day, even though they were present in Sabine Woods the following day.

The male Golden-fronted Woodpecker was seen briefly in the east part of Sabine Woods, and all the other expected woodpeckers were present.

A star find was a Least Flycatcher along Highway 87 at the entrance to the small cemetery on the north side. Vermilion Flycatchers are now regular on this count. This year three males were seen and one wonders how many females are not conspicuous enough to be noted.

Carolina Wrens used to be regular residents in the wooded areas but this year's one was the first in three years. Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers seem to be particularly numerous this winter. A Northern Parula was the first since 1999 while a Black-and-white Warbler was found for the second consecutive year. Orange-crowned Warblers and Common Yellowthroats were about normal.

Although there were no "unusual" sparrows, the regular species were all found and in normal numbers, except for Le Conte's Sparrow, most of which are usually seen from the airboat. Possibly the highlight of the count was a male Western Tanager, found in Sabine Woods. This bird has been seen by several observers since then, but it is extremely shy and very difficult to find.

WHISTLING-DUCK, Black-bellied (19); GOOSE, Greater White-fronted (46); GOOSE, Snow (23831); GOOSE, Ross's (22); GOOSE, Canada (8); GADWALL (240); WIGEON, American (3); MALLARD (10); DUCK, Mottled (17); TEAL, Blue-winged (97); SHOVELER, Northern (75); PINTAIL, Northern (86); TEAL, Green-winged (659); CANVASBACK (3); REDHEAD (10); DUCK, Ring-necked (7); SCAUP, Greater (6); SCAUP, Lesser (598); SCAUP, Species (500); BUFFLEHEAD (20); GOLDENEYE, Common (3); MERGANSER, Hooded (76); MERGANSER, Red-breasted (40); DUCK, Ruddy (234); LOON, Common (5); GREBE, Pied-billed (38); GREBE, Eared (1); CORMORANT, Neotropic (127); CORMORANT, Double-crested (62); CORMORANT species (70); PELICAN, American White (297); PELICAN, Brown (116); BITTERN, American (7); HERON, Great Blue (69); EGRET, Great (191); EGRET, Snowy (119); HERON, Little Blue (9); HERON, Tricolored (30); HERON, Green (3); NIGHT-HERON, Black-crowned (37); NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crowned (2); IBIS, White (405); IBIS, Plegadis species (155); SPOONBILL, Roseate (60); VULTURE, Black (65); VULTURE, Turkey (7); OSPREY (5); KITE, White-tailed (6); HARRIER, Northern (40); HAWK, Sharp-shinned (1); HAWK, Cooper's (3); HAWK, Red-shouldered (1); HAWK, Red-tailed (36); CARACARA, Crested (6); KESTREL, American (24); MERLIN (821); PLOVER, Black-bellied (49); PLOVER, Snowy (30); PLOVER, Semipalmated (84); PLOVER, Piping (27); KILLDEER (115);

OYSTERCATCHER, American (2); STILT, Black-necked (9); AVOCET, American (212); SANDPIPER, Spotted (6); YELLOWLEGS, Greater (71); WILLET (98); YELLOWLEGS, Lesser (31); YELLOWLEGS, species (4); GODWIT, Marbled (8); TURNSTONE, Ruddy (10); SANDERLING (83); SANDPIPER, Western (100); SANDPIPER, Least (146); DUNLIN (443); DOWITCHER, Short-billed (5); DOWITCHER, Long-billed (735); SNIPE, Wilson's (29); GULL, Bonaparte's (17); GULL, Laughing (486); GULL, Ring-billed (344); GULL, Herring (44); TERN, Gull-billed (2); TERN, Common (4); TERN, Forster's (430); TERN, Royal (36); PIGEON, Rock (119); COLLARED-DOVE, Eurasian (1); DOVE, White-winged (24); DOVE, Mourning (127); DOVE, Inca (2); OWL, Great Horned (7); KINGFISHER, Belted (29); WOODPECKER, Golden-fronted (1); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (7); SAPSUCKER, Yellow-bellied (4); WOODPECKER, Downy (11); FLICKER, Northern (6); FLYCATCHER, Least (1); PHOEBE, Eastern (34); FLYCATCHER, Vermilion (2); SHRIKE, Loggerhead (59); VIREO, White-eyed (1); VIREO, Blue-headed (4); JAY, Blue (15); SWALLOW, Tree (234); CHICKADEE, Carolina (9); WREN, Carolina (1); WREN, House (10); WREN, Sedge (107); WREN, Marsh (8); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (54); KINGLET, Ruby-crowned (61); THRUSH, Hermit (1); CATBIRD, Gray (9); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (27); THRASHER, Brown (16); STARLING, European (245); PIPIT, American (36); WARBLER, Black-and-white (1); WARBLER, Orange-

crowned (38); YELLOWTHROAT, Common (47); PARULA, Northern (1); WARBLER, Palm (2); WARBLER, Yellow-rumped (246); WARBLER, Yellow-r. (Myrtle) (10); TOWHEE, Eastern (1); SPARROW, Vesper (3); SPARROW, Savannah (240); SPARROW, Le Conte's (2); SPARROW, Nelson's (7); SPARROW, Seaside (27); SPARROW, Song (23); SPARROW, Lincoln's (4); SPARROW, Swamp (112); SPARROW, White-throated (42); SPARROW, White-crowned (37); SPARROW, species (150); TANAGER, Western (1); CARDINAL, Northern (23); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (2401); MEADOWLARK, Eastern (20); MEADOWLARK, species (22); GRACKLE, Common (48); GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (182); GRACKLE, Great-tailed (246); COWBIRD, Brown-headed (3); GOLDFINCH, American (4); SPARROW, House (2); SPECIES, total (150); INDIVIDUALS, total (38378); Observers (18); Parties (8); Party-hrs total (66.70); Party-miles total (92.45); Party-hs on foot (28.25); Party-miles on foot (15.40); Party-hrs by car (27.70); Party-miles by car (65.05); Party-hrs by boat (5.00); Party-miles by boat (4.00); Party-hrs by 4-wheeler (3.00); Party-miles by 4-wheeler (8.00); Party-hrs stationary (2.75). Participants: Jessica Barry, Mary Carter, Nancy Fisher, Bill Graber, John Haynes, Robert Hurt, Gary Kelley, Randy Lewis, John Mariani, Steve Mayes, Jenny Shuffield, Christine Sliva, Harlan Stewart, Ken Sztraky, Patrick Walther, Ron Weeks, Jana and John Whittle.

John A. Whittle

Orange County Christmas Bird Count – 1 January 2015

Despite a forecast of bad weather, which luckily never happened, we had a great count coming in at 127 species. This is two better than our average, but still below our best count of 134 species seen in the 2002 count. We would like to thank all land owners for their cooperation and a noted thank you to the special people at the Baily Ranch, our newest members, for all their help.

WOW -- talk about a way to start the New Year in birding. Most of our group were treated to an early morning flyover of an immature Bald Eagle for our first bird of the New Year, and the last birds of the day were a pair of Crested Caracaras. Ducks and their kind are one of our better finds on this count due to all the marsh habitat. This season was no exception and good numbers of all our usual species were seen. We added a new species this year with a find of 24 Canada Geese. Heron and pelicans numbers were on about our average this year. Ibis numbers greatly improved due to new habitat being covered. Raptor numbers were in line overall, but we did find four Bald Eagles this day; two adult and two immature as well as the pair of day-ending Crested Caracaras.

Shorebirds are a weak link in our count and we missed even our usual birds like American Woodcock and Spotted Sandpiper, but did manage to record Sandpiper species with a flyover of a small group. We did add a gull species to the mix with four Franklin's Gulls seen at the Entergy plant for the first time. Dove numbers were on average but there was a big uptick in White-wings noted. We did locate two Barn Owls this year in of all places a lone hay barn. Woodpeckers are still enjoying the aftermath of past hurricanes and numbers are doing well. Another notable species this year was the Vermillion Flycatcher with four separate birds. We had one full adult male, two immature males and one female.

Crows and such were average but we did miss finding any Gray Catbirds for the first time. We did well on smaller birds like wrens and kinglets with average numbers. Our last two new species this year were a Sprague's Pipit which flushed and gave all good looks and did its characteristic flight and call, and the long overdue Black-and-white Warbler. Blackbirds and sparrows were unremarkable as usual, and it is a hit or

miss on these birds on this count with juncos, towhees and some other sparrows being missed. But we did record a lone Pine Siskin mixed in with a flock of American Goldfinches.

Greater White-fronted Goose (64); Snow Goose (8); Ross's Goose (1); Gadwall (67); Mallard (10); Mottled Duck (4); Redhead (5); Northern Shoveler (20); Ring-necked Duck (17); Lesser Scaup (164); Common Goldeneye (1); Bufflehead (2); Ruddy Duck (8); Hooded Merganser (5); Pied-billed Grebe (53); Neotropic Cormorant (111); Double-crested Cormorant (200); Anhinga (4); American White Pelican (96); Brown Pelican (89); Tricolored Heron (1); Little Blue Heron (2); Snowy Egret (51); Great Blue Heron (23); Great Egret (37); Black-crowned Night-Heron (6); White Ibis (283); *Plegadis* Ibis (198); Roseate Spoonbill (9); Black Vulture (12); Turkey Vulture (37); Osprey (14); Bald Eagle (4); Northern Harrier (6); Cooper's Hawk (3); Red-shouldered Hawk (6); Red-tailed Hawk (20); Northern Caracara (2); American Kestrel (11); Merlin (1); Peregrine Falcon (2); Sora (3); Common Gallinule (15); American Coot (1060); Wilson's Snipe (1); Greater Yellowlegs (6); Lesser Yellowlegs (4); yellowlegs sp (1315); Willet (5); Sandpiper species (peeps) (10); Black-necked Stilt (40); Killdeer (38); Ring-billed Gull (114); Herring Gull (1); Bonaparte's Gull (13); Franklins Gull (3); Laughing Gull (74); Caspian Tern (1); Gull species (200); Royal Tern (11); Common Tern (8); Forster's Tern (23); Black Skimmer (100); Common Loon (1); Rock Pigeon (14); Eurasian Collared-Dove (23); Mourning Dove (178); White-winged Dove (168); Inca Dove (1); Barn Owl (2); Belted Kingfisher (11); Red-headed Woodpecker (2); Red-bellied Woodpecker (30); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (5); Downy Woodpecker (12); Northern (Yellow-shafted) Flicker (7); Pileated Woodpecker (10); Eastern Phoebe (18); Vermilion Flycatcher (4); Blue Jay (90); American Crow (3); Cave Swallow (1); Cave/Cliff Swallow (1); Tree Swallow (661); White-eyed Vireo (1); Blue-headed Vireo (3); Loggerhead Shrike (14); Cedar Waxwing (42); Eastern Bluebird (36); Hermit Thrush (3); American Robin (426); Northern Mockingbird (41); Brown Thrasher (2); European Starling (228); Brown-headed Nuthatch (2); Brown Creeper (1); Sedge Wren (4); Marsh Wren (1); Carolina Wren (18); Winter Wren (1); House Wren (10); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (3); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (40); Golden-crowned Kinglet (7); Carolina Chickadee (53); Tufted Titmouse (7); American Pipit (44); Sprague's Pipit (1); Orange-crowned Warbler (12); Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle) (185); Pine Warbler (8); Black-and-white Warbler (1); Common Yellowthroat (7); Song Sparrow (7); Swamp Sparrow (17); White-throated Sparrow (21); Savannah Sparrow (32); Chipping Sparrow (27); Northern Cardinal (51); Red-winged Blackbird (425); Eastern Meadowlark (43); Great-tailed Grackle (257); Boat-tailed Grackle (205); Common Grackle (203); Brown-headed Cowbird (1); Pine Siskin (1); American Goldfinch (536); House Sparrow (26); total species 127; total individuals (8998).

Ken Sztraky

Bolivar Peninsula Christmas Count – 18 December 2014

As with so many local counts this year, the weather was not particularly kind, although only a few unlucky observers had to suffer heavy rain. The species total was 181, a number exceeded only four times in the 52-year history of this count. Forty observers in 15 parties resulted in good coverage of the varied habitat in this circle.

New species to the count were Anna's Hummingbird, with two relatively cooperative wintering birds (male and female) opposite Boy Scout Woods in High Island. A Couch's Kingbird and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher were also new. A Black-throated Gray Warbler in Smith Oaks in High Island was a very good find. A first-year male Orchard Oriole in the same location as the Anna's Hummingbird was also new to the count. Another notable find was two Black Rails banded that night is a research project in the marshes between High Island and Rollover Pass. Both Western Meadowlark and Yellow-headed Blackbird were recorded for only the second time on this count. Surprisingly, the Yellow-Breasted Chat in High Island was the 12th in the history of the count.

Snow Geese numbers were high, but ducks not so much so, as Gadwall, Green-winged Teal and scaup were either not seen or not present in numbers as high as some years. Although Redheads have been quite numerous in the count circle and nearby this winter, none were seen on count day itself. On the other hand, 19 Bald Eagles and 46 Crested Caracara were both new highs by a considerable margin, and do represent very real increases in wintering populations. The value of CBC data is perhaps more in the numbers seen than in the occurrence of a few vagrant and lingering species. This year's counts established new highs for Ruddy Turnstone, Eurasian Collared-Dove and Grasshopper Sparrow.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck (77); Fulvous Whistling-Duck (16); Greater White-fronted Goose (563); Snow Goose (24238); Snow Goose (white form) (2750); Snow Goose (blue form) (1880); Ross's Goose (22); Cackling/Canada Goose (7); Gadwall (2919); American Wigeon (164); Mallard (78); Mottled Duck (228); Blue-winged Teal (159); Cinnamon Teal (1); Northern Shoveler (1601); Northern Pintail (1793); Green-winged Teal (7087); Canvasback (9); Redhead (cw); Ring-necked Duck (135); Greater Scaup (1); Lesser Scaup (40); scaup sp. (37); Surf Scoter (8); Black Scoter (6); Bufflehead (13); Common Goldeneye (1); Hooded Merganser (6); Red-breasted Merganser (71); Ruddy Duck (77); Northern Bobwhite (8); Common Loon (3); loon sp. (1); Pied-billed Grebe (126); Horned Grebe (10); Northern Gannet (1); American White Pelican (272); Brown Pelican (143); Neotropic Cormorant (154); Double-crested Cormorant (38); cormorant sp. (5); Anhinga (6); American Bittern (3); Great Blue Heron (Blue form) (77); Great Egret (134); Snowy Egret (64); Little Blue Heron (15); Tricolored Heron (21); Reddish Egret (5); Cattle Egret (30); Black-crowned Night-Heron (95); White Ibis (290); White-faced Ibis (2790); *Plegadis* sp. (823); Roseate Spoonbill (95); Black Vulture (34); Turkey Vulture (357); Osprey (8); White-tailed Kite (21); Bald Eagle (19); Northern Harrier (86); Sharp-shinned Hawk (7); Cooper's Hawk (6); Red-

shouldered Hawk (1); White-tailed Hawk (1); Red-tailed Hawk (59); Crested Caracara (46); American Kestrel (25); Merlin (3); Peregrine Falcon (4); Yellow Rail (3); Black Rail (2); Clapper Rail (18); King Rail (15); Virginia Rail (7); Sora (4); Common Gallinule (112); American Coot (1525); Black-bellied Plover (48); Snowy Plover (15); Semipalmated Plover (76); Piping Plover (3); Killdeer (283); American Oystercatcher (10); Black-necked Stilt (15); American Avocet (136); Spotted Sandpiper (2); Greater Yellowlegs (46); Willet (66); Lesser Yellowlegs (55); yellowlegs sp. (5); Long-billed Curlew (2); Marbled Godwit (17); Ruddy Turnstone (23); Sanderling (51); Western Sandpiper (1036); Least Sandpiper (208); Dunlin (645); Stilt Sandpiper (13); peep sp. (4); Short-billed Dowitcher (28); Long-billed Dowitcher (473); dowitcher sp. (55); Wilson's Snipe (98); American Woodcock (1); Laughing Gull (78); Bonaparte's Gull (25); Ring-billed Gull (62); Herring Gull (11); Gull-billed Tern (3); Caspian Tern (32); Forster's Tern (405); Royal Tern (40); Sandwich Tern (2); Black Skimmer (200); Rock Pigeon (12); Eurasian Collared-Dove (84); White-winged Dove (43); Mourning Dove (155); Inca Dove (6); Barn Owl (23); Eastern Screech-Owl (1); Great Horned Owl (6); Short-eared Owl (2); Anna's Hummingbird (2); Belted Kingfisher (24); Red-bellied Woodpecker (1); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (3); Downy Woodpecker (6); Northern (Yellow-shafted) Flicker (2); Eastern Phoebe (102); Vermilion Flycatcher (6); Couch's Kingbird (1); Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (1); Loggerhead Shrike (41); White-eyed Vireo (2); Blue-headed Vireo (6); Blue Jay (24); Tree Swallow (114); Barn Swallow (1); Carolina Chickadee (3); Carolina Wren (8); House Wren (31); Sedge Wren (114); Marsh Wren (81); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (113); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (39); Hermit Thrush (22); American Robin (5); Gray Catbird (22); Northern Mockingbird (69); Brown Thrasher (7); European Starling (865); American Pipit (230); Sprague's Pipit (3); Cedar Waxwing (1); Orange-crowned Warbler (54); Yellow-rumped Warbler (113); Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler (83); Black-throated Gray Warbler (1); Pine Warbler (6); Palm Warbler (1); Common Yellowthroat (95); Wilson's Warbler (2); Yellow-breasted Chat (1); Eastern Towhee (cw); Chipping Sparrow (2); Vesper Sparrow (3); Savannah Sparrow (458); Grasshopper Sparrow (16); Le Conte's Sparrow (35); Nelson's Sparrow (55); Seaside Sparrow (113); Song Sparrow (25); Lincoln's Sparrow (12); Swamp Sparrow (237); White-throated Sparrow (76); White-crowned Sparrow (44); sparrow sp. (1); Northern Cardinal (51); Indigo Bunting (1); Red-winged Blackbird (6706); Eastern Meadowlark (260); Western Meadowlark (1); meadowlark sp. (39); Yellow-headed Blackbird (1); Brewer's Blackbird (1); Common Grackle (262); Boat-tailed Grackle (3042); Great-tailed Grackle (356); Bronzed Cowbird (1); Brown-headed Cowbird (2342); Orchard Oriole (1); House Sparrow (17); Total Individuals (72761); Total Species Reported (181). Party-hours on foot (56.90); party-miles on foot (37.55); Party-hours by car (76.75); party-miles by car (135.95); party-hours by non-motorized boat (3.75); party miles by non-motorized boat (1.00); party-hours nocturnal birding (6.00); party-miles nocturnal birding (40.5); total party-hours (136.9); total party-miles (174.5).

Compilers: Steve Mayes and David Sarkozi.

John A Whittle

Bird Sightings – January 2015

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 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 birded 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) with comment on reason it is noteworthy, if applicable.

Seen in our core Counties (listed above)

Franklin's Gull	Jan 1	ORA- Bridge City Entergy Plant Ken Sztraky Orange Co CBC
Lsr. Black-backed Gull	Jan 30	JEF-Pt Arthur landfill (2+) Ron Weeks, multiple observers.
Thayer's Gull	Jan 30	JEF-Pt Arthur landfill (1) Ron Weeks (1st year bird)
Least Flycatcher	Jan 3	JEF-TX87 (1) JM
Say's Phoebe	Jan 24 on	JEF-Needmore Rd (1) JHH and multiple observers subsequently
N. Rough Winged Swallow	Jan 4	JEF-WJC (1) Angie Westmoreland and Jodi Henricks
Cave Swallow	Jan 1	ORA-Bridge City Marshes (1) Orange Co CBC
Mountain Bluebird	Jan 15 thru Jan 19 Nov 22 (remained)	JEF-WJC (3) JHH JEF-WJC (1) GTAS Field Trip
Black-and-white Warbler	Jan 1 Jan 3	ORA (1) Orange Co CBC JEF-SW (1) J&R
Northern Parula	Jan 2 Jan 3	JEF-SW (1) RL JEF-SW (1) J&R, JM, SM Sea Rim CBC
Western Tanager	Jan 3 Jan 4	JEF-SW (1) J&R, JM Sea Rim CBC JEF-SW (1) J&R

Nearby Counties (very rare species only)

Swainson's Hawk	Jan 17	CHA- FM1985 (1) GTAS Field Trip (very rare in winter)
Mountain Plover	thru Jan 12	GAL-Bolivar Flats (1) continuing bird from Dec 13
Solitary Sandpiper	Jan 1	GAL-Bol. Ferry (1) Scott Buckel (no details given)
Red Knot	Jan 1-31	GAL-Bol. Flats (up to 8) multiple observers
Eastern Whip-poor-Will	Jan 10	GAL-Smith Oaks (1) Brad Lirette and Ron Weeks
Anna's Hummingbird	thru Jan 21	GAL-Boy Scout Woods (1) continuing bird from Dec 18
Buff-bellied Hummingbird	Jan 14	GAL-Smith Oaks (1) Stephanie Bilodeau
Say's Phoebe	Jan 7 – 24	CHA-FM1985 (1) Dennis Shepler, multiple observers
McCown's Longspur	Jan 10-11	GAL-Bolivar Flats (1) Greg Page; Brad Lirette, Ron Weeks
Yellow-breasted Chat	Jan 18	GAL-Boy Scout Woods (1) Mike Hillman
Black-headed Grosbeak	Jan 13	LIB-South of Liberty, east of FM563 (1) Shelli Ellerbe
Bachman's Sparrow	Jan 2	JAS-Sam Rayburn Dam tailrace (1 heard only) Phillip Hight
Purple Finch	Jan 14	TYL-N of Colmesneil (4) Charles Smith

Abbreviations used: CBC – Christmas Bird Count; CHA – Chambers County; GAL – Galveston County; JEF – Jefferson County; JHH – John Haynes; JM – John Mariani; J&R – Jessica Barry and Randy

Lewis; LIB – Liberty County; RL – Randy Lewis; RW – Ron Weeks; SM -- Steve Mayes; SW – Sabine Woods; TYL – Tyler County; WJC – West Jefferson County.

Commentary: January this year has brought more than its normal share of interesting birds, even though January is not a month in which we see any birds that we suspect are either lingering or late migrants, or very early migrants. There are a few wintering birds of species that do not normally winter.

Redheads have been quite common and widespread this winter and are present in a number of locations across the county. Cinnamon Teal are also a little more numerous than usual, and easily found in Cattail Marsh in particular.

As we noted last months, Bald Eagle numbers continue to increase from year to year. White-tailed Hawks seem poised to establish a small presence locally, although they have attempted this before, only to retreat back west. Two young birds are in the McDermand Road area, and one young and one adult bird are regularly seen on Big Hill Road. The species is also commonly seen along FM1985 in Chambers County. This also seems to be a mini-invasion year for Say's Phoebe.

Just outside our area, a Eurasian Wigeon and a dark morph Ferruginous Hawk are at Cameron Prairie NWR, south of Lake Charles on the east part of LA 27 on the east side of the Calcasieu River.

We Want your Reports of Rare Birds!

Although we have changed the format of this Section of the Brown Pelican, we do still want your reports of rare birds. Because of the volume of reports now available, it is not practical, either from a compilation time or space perspective, to compile summaries of every species in the area.

Determining if bird populations are increasing or decreasing is not easy, and requires counts carried out with standardized protocols, and, because of the vagaries of weather and related factors, many counts over a significant time span. Our Christmas Bird Counts, and our Spring and Fall Migration Counts do contribute to our knowledge, but "random" counts in our backyards and even in local birding locations do not enable population estimates to be made. The presence of species that were not previously present, and the absence of species that used to be present is helpful and on a shorter time scale. So is knowledge if migrant birds are arriving earlier or departing later.

We continue to solicit your reports of rare birds, or birds that are early or late. Even if you enter your sightings in eBird, rare birds do not always show up immediately in the eBird summaries, and your letting us know also would be appreciated. We also welcome summaries of your wintering hummingbirds as this appears to be a changing dynamic. But we aren't able to compile all reports of common birds.

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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..>