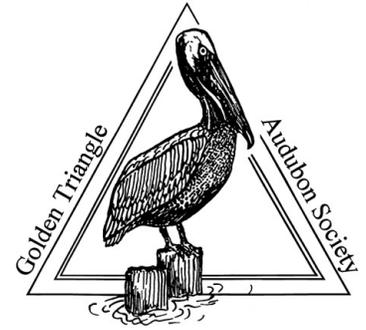


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 21 No. 6

June 2015

Summer Break!

As usual, there will be no membership meetings in June or July. Our next meeting will be on **THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.** in the Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont, Texas, but don't forget our annual field trip to the Liberty area to look for Swallow-tailed Kites and other species on Saturday August 1.

The next issue of the *Brown Pelican* will be a combined July/August issue, to be published in early August.

Programs Over the Years – Happy 20th Golden Triangle Audubon!

It has now been 20 years since Golden Triangle Audubon has had meetings with programs. In 1995 there were several organizational meetings when we did not have programs. But since June of 1995, there have been 231 programs, and most of them with speakers. We have had very few occasions when the speakers could not come such as oil spills, ice storms, etc. One day at 5:30 on the day of the meeting, we had to relocate where we were having our meeting that started at 7:00 and the two out of town speakers helped us sweep and put out chairs.

I am grateful for all of the speakers that have spoken to our group over the 20 year period. These speakers do this voluntarily and some receive money for gas. There have been maybe ten that we have given money for them to stay in a hotel. So far, we have had 79 different speakers. The majority of all the speakers worked at a full time job, prepared their program on their off time, then gave up their Thursday night to present to us, then had to work all day on Friday too. That takes dedication! One speaker, David Bradford, teaches high school Biology all day long, then drives to Beaumont from west Harris County, then back that same night to teach on Friday. That is just an example of the kindness that our speakers show by doing programs for us.

We have had three speakers who have spoken at least seven times. Those speakers are David Bradford, Gerald Duhon, and John Whittle. Many have spoken at least four times or more and those people are David Baker, John Haynes, Levie Horton, Robert Hurt, Stephan Lorenz, Steve Mayes, and David Sarkozi. Harlan Stewart has spoken and several times others have used his bird photographs for their presentations.

We have had programs about Africa, Antarctica, Australia, Belize, Bering Sea, Brazil, Chili, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Jamaica, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, and the United Kingdom. And from regions and states such as Alaska, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Upper Texas Coast, Lower Rio Grande Valley, Central Texas Coast., Bosque, the Texas Pan Handle, High Island, Bolivar Flats, Village Creek, Trinity River, Sabine Woods, and Sea Rim State Park.

Certain kinds of birds such as warblers, hawks, hummingbirds, colonial waterfowl, ducks. Some were even on specific birds such as mottled Ducks, Piping Plovers, Sparrows, Ivory-billed Woodpecker, Bluebirds, Purple Martins, etc. Certain other species such as butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies, snakes, mushrooms, native plants, etc Bird rehab and photography are two more, and we have even had two speakers to speak about hawk migration.

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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.

Saturday August 1. Field Trip to Liberty-Dayton Area. Each year, several of us have made a pilgrimage to the Liberty-Dayton area in August. During the first half of August each year, Swallow-tailed Kites congregate in the Trinity River bottomlands between Liberty and Dayton for two or three weeks before they migrate south for the winter. Sometimes, we are lucky enough to find up to 20 or more; other times they are more spread out and we don't see quite as many.

This has become a regular field trip. We will meet on Saturday August 1 at 8:00 AM at the McDonalds at 1923 Highway 90 in Liberty. This is on the north side of the Highway at the intersection with Travis Street, one block west of Main St/Highway 227. Carpooling is highly desirable on this trip. Most of this trip does not necessitate extensive walking, although some of the group will probably do quite a bit of walking. The trip will probably not last beyond noon.

We will check the area along Highway 90 between Liberty and Dayton, perhaps several times, and also the Liberty Municipal Park area. We might even also drive down FM1409. In addition to the Swallow-tailed Kites, there are usually Mississippi Kites flying low in the residential areas of Liberty north of US 90. Depending on how wet the area is, there may be other birds characteristic of bottomlands.

For more information, contact Steve Mayes (sgmayes@hotmail.com) or 409-722-5807).

Thursday August 20. Membership Meeting. Some birds of Tanzania.

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank Laurie Baker, Linda Davis, Sheila Hebert, Denise Kelley, Carol Lynn Loker, Dana Nelson, Lynn Otto, Phil Rogers, Gail Slocum, Harlan Stewart for bringing refreshments in April. **We need volunteers to bring items for all fall meetings.** Pick the meeting at which you want to help. 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.

Saturday August 22 Field Trip to Bolivar Flats. Tentative. Meet leader Steve Mayes at the vehicle barrier at Bolivar Flats at 8:30 a.m. Take Highway 124 south from Winnie about 20 miles through High Island. At the shoreline, turn right along Highway 87 and proceed approximately 25 miles through Gilchrist and Crystal Beach until you come to the intersection with Loop 108. At that intersection, turn left (south -- the opposite direction from Loop 108) on Rettilon Road to the beach. If conditions permit, drive onto the sand and turn right to the vehicle barrier (about 1/2 mile). It is about a 90-minute drive, with no allowance for stops, from Beaumont or mid-County to the Flats.

You will need a Galveston County Beach Parking Permit, obtainable for \$10 from most merchants on the Peninsula, to park on the beach.



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

Programs over the Years

(continued from front page)

We have had two speakers from Anahuac NWR, four speakers from McFaddin NWR, five speakers from the Big Thicket, three speakers from JD Murphree, and speakers about Cattail Marsh.

A few of the largest attended meetings were when Ro Wauer spoke on Big Bend and John O'Neill on Texas Birds and Sandy Komito spoke on his big year. We had about 80 people at some of those meetings, but they were publicized. Publicity is one office that we cannot seem to keep filled. It really does help to have a membership/publicity person to help our group grow.

Please let me know if you would like to speak or if you know of a speaker who would do a program for us. We meet the third Thursday of August, September, October, November, January, February, March, April and May. My email address is janafw@aol.com. Also, if you know of someone who would like to be the membership/publicity chair for GTAS please let us know. If you would like to see a list of speakers and topics, I can email one to you at your request. *Jana Whittle*

Report on May Program

Stephan Lorenz is a very talented 35 year old speaker and birder who spoke at our GTAS May 18 monthly meeting about the Brazilian Amazon. He does bird tours there with High Lonesome Bird Tours. The place where they stayed was the Cristalino Jungle Lodge near Alta Florista. This lodge does not have any feeders of any kind. They try to keep the area totally natural. He showed us many nice pictures of beautiful birds from the area. He told us that there are 586 bird species that can be seen in this area. They are from 66 different families. Here is a list of some of the bird species in the area:

3 species of Pootoos; 46 species of Antbirds; 46 species of Ovenbirds; 80 species of species of Flycatchers; 13 species of Cuckoos; 43 species of Tanagers; 9 species of Manakins; 7 species of Cotingas; 24 species of Hummingbirds; 13 species of Herons; 5 species of Kingfishers; 5 species of Grans; 13 species of Woodpeckers; 6 species of Jacamars; 3 species of Motmots; 12 species of Puffbirds .

We really appreciate Stephan driving from Houston to do a program for us. Many times he has had to work all day long and then drive the four hours round trip. This is the fourth program he has done for us. The other ones were on the birds of the Bering Sea, New Zealand, and Chile. He has traveled and birded in every corner of the continent, from the Aleutian Islands to the Dry Tortugas, from Newfoundland to Baja and south to the Darien Gap, Panama. He has visited 48 states, birded all of Central America, and has birded in Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Ecuador, Chile, Columbus, Brazil, Peru, Malaysia, Borneo, Australia, and South Africa. Many of these places that he birded, he did on very little money by renting wrecks and either camping or sleeping in the car. I am so glad that he is willing to share his experiences with us and help encourage us to get out and bird wherever we are.

Jana Whittle

Dixie Kay Townsend

We have been notified that one of our recently deceased members, Dixie Townsend, has left a significant sum in her will to Golden Triangle Audubon. We are very grateful for this and have conveyed our thanks and condolences to her family. We asked for additional information about her interest in birds and Audubon – she was a long time member of GTAS – and received the following from her executor.

"My name is Tommy Rollins, nephew and Executor of Dixie Kay Townsend's estate. I am in receipt of your letter about Aunt Dixie's contribution to the Audubon Society. The contribution actually is from two people; I will explain.

"Aunt Dixie and her best friend, Anna Ruth Vogelvang were roommates for 50 plus years. In each of their wills they left the exact same things as the other and then left everything to the survivor. In this case, Dixie passed on November 14, 2014 while Anna passed May 23, 2014. So as you can see Dixie was the survivor; however, one-half is from Dixie and one-half from Anna.

"Anna and Dixie both were bird lovers. I remember when I was a kid they had a pull behind camper and traveled the country bird watching. I had no idea their love of birds until I cleaned their house out so it could be sold. They had bird books, bird baths, bird towels, bird stickers on the refrigerator, bird throws, bird pictures. I guess you get the idea. They loved to fish as well so I'm sure when they were fishing they had a pair of binoculars close by. They traveled abroad many times as Anna's family was from Holland and had many pictures from there as well. About ten years ago, I began going to Costa Rica fishing and I would tell them of the beautiful neon colored birds (parrots) and their eyes would light up.

"Both Anna and Dixie were very special people and helped many people in their life time. They were simple people and lived frugal lives saving their money so when the time came to part this earth they could leave behind a little something for the things that gave them happiness while here on earth, and bird watching was one of their favorites."

Golden Triangle Audubon Facebook Page

Just in case you are not aware of it, Golden Triangle Audubon has a Facebook Page. If you are on Facebook please go to it and like it. On the page, you will see some of the birds from a recent GTAS field trip, some bird pictures that could help you compare for bird ID, recent sightings at Sabine Woods, meeting announcements, field trips announcements, etc. Also, please send pictures in to our Facebook page and share it with your friends. This is a less formal medium than our web page, and we encourage all to contribute your sightings or picture, or just reports of the birds you have seen. Please be sure that you indicate the bird species (if you know!) and the dates and location of the birds in the photograph. We thank John Mariani for acting as administrator of this Facebook page.

Jana Whittle

Spring Migration Count – 9 May 2015

On the Spring Migration Count, we recorded 180 species. Our initial reaction to this was one of disappointment, because the total is significantly lower than in the previous three years. With no weather events, we had to settle for the sixth highest total in the 22 years we have been conducting this count. Given that absence, this was actually a very good result. Our coverage of the county was about normal, but there are large areas, especially south of Highway 73 and west of Port Arthur that are not covered.

Most of our waterfowl are strictly winter visitors, with typically only one or two remaining by early May. Gadwall, Northern Shoveler and Lesser Scaup, the usual species with a few lingerers were all seen. There is some question as to whether the American Wigeon in Cattail Marsh is physically impaired in some way – indeed, it has not been seen to fly. Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks continued their colonization of the area, and 90 represented a new high for the count. One or two pairs of Ruddy Ducks probably nest some years in Cattail Marsh, and two were seen there this year.

Fifteen Northern Bobwhites was the highest since 2004. All were seen in the western part of the county, and hopefully indicates some recovery from recent declines. The two Magnificent Frigatebirds were seen separately, one of them over the Sabine Woods area. The number of Neotropic Cormorants was low by recent standards. We occasionally miss American White Pelican as most leave by early May, but not this year, but missing Brown Pelican has not happened since 2001. Brown Pelicans typically cover many miles in a day, and we are only able to easily survey about seven of the 35 miles of shoreline in Jefferson County. Observations on prior and subsequent days do not suggest any precipitous drop in Brown Pelican numbers; they just weren't where we were on count day.

Among the herons, the large herons, Great Blue and Great Egret, were seen in normal numbers, even though we considered, from anecdotal reports, that Great Blues had not been as numerous as usual this spring. Cattle Egrets were on the low side of normal. Little Blue Heron numbers were low. Green Heron numbers were the lowest since 1995 (when coverage of the county was much less than now). Yellow-crowned Night-Heron numbers were also on the low side, rounding out a somewhat disappointing showing of herons.

White Ibis numbers increased after three low years, but conversely, dark ibis numbers were down. Nevertheless, we recorded a Glossy Ibis for the third straight year. Numbers of Roseate Spoonbills seem to spike in occasional years, and 75 is significantly above the long term average.

Raptors were a bright spot on this year's count. Apparently, Swallow-tailed Kites are being seen fairly regularly over Beaumont this spring, suggesting a further increase in the local breeding population along the Neches and Sabine River bottomlands. Incidental to the monitoring of a Mountain Bluebird that spent last winter on McDermind Road, we learned that there were two juvenile White-tailed Hawks in that area. We found both of them – they are slightly differently plumaged – on count day, one of them still at the bluebird site. A pair of Bald Eagles nested across from Cattail Marsh again this year, and fledged one young eagle. The

young bird and one of the adults were seen on the count. The slow but steady increase in Swainson's Hawks continues, with nine birds seen this year. Broad-winged Hawks have always nested in Jefferson County in very small numbers, but this year's five was the highest in the history of the count, as was the eight Crested Caracaras, as that species continues to establish itself in the area. Mississippi Kites have now been seen on the count every year since 2008.

We don't know what to say about the rail numbers. Clapper and King Rail numbers were normal, but we missed Virginia Rail, disappointing after two years of finding them. There were good numbers around during the winter, especially at Cattail Marsh. To find only three Soras was strange, as they had been very numerous (and vocal) in the normal marshy areas all winter. Purple and Common Gallinule were near normal.

Our observers noted that there was a large number of people on both the Sea Rim and McFaddin beaches and this may have reduced some of the shorebird numbers in areas we covered, although it probably does not explain the low numbers of both yellowlegs species, as they do not normally frequent beaches in any number. It probably did affect the smaller beach sandpipers, Western and Semi-palmated in particular, and they likely just moved eastward or westward into beach areas that are not readily accessible by people except by a long, long walk on foot. We missed Hudsonian Godwit last year, but there were two groups in west Jefferson County rice fields this year. Whimbrel numbers seen on the count have varied significantly over the years, but we almost always find some, as we did this year.

Gulls and terns have been in low numbers on the beaches in fall counts in recent years, but, except for Royal and Sandwich Terns, numbers were good this spring. Sandwich Terns over the years have usually been either feast or famine, and this was a famine year. It was also disappointing not to find any Black Skimmers this year.

The expected doves and pigeons were found in very much normal numbers. Finding owls is usually a matter of knowing nest or roost site. The Barn Owls were at a nest in Hamshire, with the Great Horned Owl roosting (and probably nesting) nearby. The Barred Owls and the Eastern Screech-Owl were also at roosting sites. Common Nighthawks were common enough along the coast, but have become scarce further inland, possibly because the tar and gravel roofs they prefer have given way to other types of roofing.

Red-headed Woodpeckers were at an all-time high, possibly indicating an increasing number of decaying large limbs on trees otherwise surviving after Hurricane Ike seven years ago. Other woodpeckers seemed in normal numbers, including the one male Golden-fronted Woodpecker still at Sabine Woods.

Similar to last year, we saw relatively few flycatchers on count day, with Eastern Wood-Pewees in particular being low, but we did find an Olive-sided Flycatcher in Sabine Woods and a good number of Great Crested Flycatchers, which seem to be plentiful this year.

The only species new to the count was a Yellow-green Vireo seen very briefly by three observers in Sabine Woods.

Apart from that and one calling Yellow-throated Vireo on Pine Island Bayou in the northwest section of the County, the rest of the vireos seen were White-eyed or Red-eyed.

Blue Jay populations suffered declines in recent years ascribed to West Nile Virus, which affects corvids (crows and jays) more than other groups. This year, Blue Jays bounced back to a record 148, and both American and Fish Crow numbers were healthy too.

Cliff Swallows continue to increase and large numbers are nesting under most major bridges, but numbers of other swallows were unimpressive. Wren numbers were very much normal.

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers almost certainly nest either in extreme northern parts of the county or else just a little further north, but we do not always find them on the count. Perhaps they are nesting and silent, making them difficult to detect. One was found this year in Beaumont

American Robins have been increasing over the years in an irregular fashion, but this year's 67 was a new high. Northern Mockingbirds also set a new high by a substantial margin, although the numbers of the various thrushes were low, despite an overall impression this spring of a very good thrush migration. European Starlings are, however, plentiful this year.

Migrant warblers very greatly in number and diversity, depending mostly on the very short term vagaries of Gulf and local weather. Count day this year was not one on which there were a great number of migrants. We have been spoiled in the last three years in having heavy migration on count day, especially 2013, but this year brought us back to more normal conditions. We probably should focus on the warblers which nest locally, and think of Prothonotary, Hooded, Yellow-throated, Northern Parula and Pine Warblers as species that we should look for away from the coastal migrant traps, and indeed we did detect all of those.

Almost all sparrows except Seaside Sparrows have left the county for points north by count day, but some Savannah Sparrows and a few Nelson's Sparrows are usually still around. Savannah numbers were low and Nelson's higher this year. Northern Cardinal numbers were high, while Indigo and Painted Bunting numbers were normal, despite an impression earlier in the migration period that Indigo Buntings were rather scarce. Dickcissels, seen mainly in the rice field areas, have become very constant. All the blackbird and grackle species seem to have been present in very normal numbers, while House Sparrow numbers were the second highest in the history of the count.

Species List:

WHISTLING-DUCK, Black-bellied (90); WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous (40); DUCK, Wood (5); GADWALL (3); WIGEON, American (1); DUCK, Mottled (56); TEAL, Blue-winged (271); SHOVELER, Northern (5); SCAUP, Lesser (4); DUCK, Ruddy (2); BOBWHITE, Northern (15); GREBE, Pied-billed (2); FRIGATEBIRD, Magnificent (2); CORMORANT, Neotropic (83); CORMORANT, Double-crested (3); ANHINGA (7); PELICAN, American White (31); PELICAN, Brown (cw); BITTERN, Least (10); HERON, Great Blue (25); EGRET, Great (164); EGRET, Snowy (86); HERON, Little Blue (35); HERON, Tricolored (57); EGRET, Cattle (583); HERON, Green (19); NIGHT-HERON, Black-crowned (3); NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crowned (42); IBIS, White (279); IBIS, Glossy (1); IBIS, White-faced (32); IBIS, *Plegadis* species (33); SPOONBILL, Roseate (75); VULTURE, Black (52); VULTURE,

Turkey (89); OSPREY (1); KITE, Swallow-tailed (1); KITE, Mississippi (2); EAGLE, Bald (2); HAWK, Cooper's (1); HAWK, Red-shouldered (8); HAWK, Broad-winged (5); HAWK, Swainson's (9); HAWK, White-tailed (2); HAWK, Red-tailed (3); CARACARA, Crested (8); FALCON, Peregrine (2); RAIL, Clapper (32); RAIL, King (4); SORA (3); GALLINULE, Purple (19); GALLINULE, Common (49); COOT, American (118); PLOVER, Black-bellied (113); PLOVER, American Golden (1); PLOVER, Snowy (2); PLOVER, Wilson's (8); PLOVER, Semipalmated (6); PLOVER, Piping (2); KILLDEER (97); STILT, Black-necked (118); AVOCET, American (81); SANDPIPER, Spotted (12); YELLOWLEGS, Greater (11); WILLET (24); YELLOWLEGS, Lesser (53); YELLOWLEGS species (2); WHIMBREL (82); GODWIT, Hudsonian (14); TURNSTONE, Ruddy (47); SANDERLING (274); SANDPIPER, Semipalmated (5); SANDPIPER, Western (6); SANDPIPER, Least (145); SANDPIPER, White-rumped (527); SANDPIPER, Peep (65); SANDPIPER, Pectoral (5); DUNLIN (30); SANDPIPER, Stilt (367); DOWITCHER, Short-billed (1); DOWITCHER, Long-billed (18); DOWITCHER species (3); PHALAROPE, Wilson's (92); GULL, Laughing (253); GULL, Ring-billed (3); GULL, Herring (5); TERN, Least (117); TERN, Caspian (10); TERN, Black (419); TERN, Common (2); TERN, Forster's (69); TERN, Royal (12); PIGEON, Rock (107); DOVE, Eurasian Collared- (56); DOVE, White-winged (151); DOVE, Mourning (342); DOVE, Inca (4); CUCKOO, Yellow-billed (17); OWL, Barn (2); SCREECH-OWL, Eastern (1); OWL, Great Horned (3); OWL, Barred (3); NIGHTHAWK, Common (20); SWIFT, Chimney (80); HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-throated (10); KINGFISHER, Belted (2); WOODPECKER, Red-headed (23); WOODPECKER, Golden-fronted (1); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (49); WOODPECKER, Downy (18); WOODPECKER, Pileated (6); FLYCATCHER, Olive-sided (1); WOODPEWEE, Eastern (7); FLYCATCHER, Acadian (2); FLYCATCHER, Traill's (cw); FLYCATCHER, Least (cw); FLYCATCHER, Empidonax (3); FLYCATCHER, Great Crested (25); KINGBIRD, Eastern (61); FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tailed (49); SHRIKE, Loggerhead (92); VIREO, White-eyed (34); VIREO, Yellow-throated (1); VIREO, Philadelphia (cw); VIREO, Red-eyed (28); VIREO, Yellow-green (1); JAY, Blue (148); CROW, American (54); CROW, Fish (37); CROW, Species (5); MARTIN, Purple (113); SWALLOW, Tree (72); SWALLOW, N. Rough-winged (13); SWALLOW, Bank (1); SWALLOW, Cliff (1389); SWALLOW, Cave (11); SWALLOW, Barn (428); SWALLOW species (122); CHICKADEE, Carolina (66); TITMOUSE, Tufted (23); WREN, Carolina (21); WREN, Marsh (18); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (1); BLUEBIRD, Eastern (26); VEERY (cw); THRUSH, Gray-cheeked (1); THRUSH, Swainson's (4); THRUSH, Wood (1); ROBIN, American (67); CATBIRD, Gray (16); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (589); THRASHER, Brown (19); STARLING, European (484); WAXWING, Cedar (86); OVENBIRD (cw); WARBLER, Worm-eating (cw); WATERTHRUSH, Northern (1); WARBLER, Black-and-white (3); WARBLER, Prothonotary (12); WARBLER, Tennessee (1); YELLOWTHROAT, Common (22); WARBLER, Hooded (4); REDSTART, American (6); PARULA, Northern (6); WARBLER, Magnolia (4); WARBLER, Bay-breasted (1); WARBLER, Blackburnian (2); WARBLER, Yellow (8); WARBLER, Chestnut-sided (1); WARBLER, Blackpoll (2); WARBLER, Pine (3); WARBLER, Yellow-throated (2); WARBLER, Black-throated Green (1); WARBLER, Canada (cw); SPARROW, Savannah (5); SPARROW, Nelson's (9); SPARROW, Seaside (23); TANAGER, Summer (7); TANAGER, Scarlet (2); CARDINAL, Northern (254); GROSBEEK, Rose-breasted (2); GROSBEEK, Blue (7); BUNTING, Indigo (13); BUNTING, Painted (16); DICKCISSEL (103); BOBOLINK (1); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (407); MEADOWLARK, Eastern (119); GRACKLE, Common (240); GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (107); GRACKLE, Great-tailed (194); GRACKLE, Gt./Boat-tailed (55); COWBIRD, Brown-headed (86); ORIOLE, Orchard (39); FINCH, House (11); SPARROW, House (244); TOTAL INDIVIDUALS (12604); TOTAL SPECIES (180) Number of Observers (17); Number of Parties (10); Number of Party-Hours - Foot (24.9); Number of Party-Hours - Car (46.4); Number of Party-Hours - Stationary (6.5); Total Party-hours (77.7); Number of Party-Miles - Foot (17.8); Number of Party-Miles - Car (550.3); Total Party-Miles (568.0); Participants: Laurie Baker, Jessica Barry, Michael Cooper, Linda and Howard Davis, Sherry Gibson, John Haynes, Sheila Hebert, Harrison Jordan, Randy Lewis, Steve Mayes, Sherrie Roden, Christine Sliva, Harlan Stewart, Ken Sztraky, Jana and John Whittle cw = Count Week (meaning the species was seen in one of the three days before the count or one of the three days after the count).

John A. Whittle

Field Trip to Hardin County -- 30 May 2015

As seems to be the theme this year, the big question for the Golden Triangle Audubon's annual Hardin county field trip was, "will the weather cooperate?" Recent forecasts showed chances of rain (possibly heavy) for the area and the abundant rain in days before the trip left the condition of some of the roads on the Hardin county route in question. Are the roads passable? Will the rain hold off? There was only one way to find out – do the field trip!

The day dawned relatively clear and a recent scouting trip suggested that the roads would not be a problem so the group met in Silsbee to explore some of the back roads of the Big Thicket area. This area of Hardin County holds good habitat for a number of species of breeding warbler along with many other birds much sought after by birders.

Two big targets of this trip are always a couple of warblers that can be hard to get on the coastal refuges: Prairie Warbler and Swainson's Warbler. Prairie Warbler is very scarce in the coastal refuges in the spring though more common in the fall but it can be easily found in the Big Thicket in its preferred nesting habitat of ~5 to 12 foot pine trees. Swainson's Warbler is often present in the coastal refuges in the spring but their cryptic plumage and skulking demeanor often makes them difficult to locate (though this spring was something of an exception) but they can be heard and sometimes seen in their nesting habitat along creeks and springs with heavy underbrush and trees. With these birds in mind, along with a host of other possibilities, the birders set out up the road.

Things started off well when a single male Wood Duck burst up from a small waterway off the road though, unfortunately, only those in the lead car were able to see it. This trip is often pretty short on non-songbirds but there were also some others seen by the entire group. The most common of these were woodpeckers. Red-bellied Woodpecker was heard from several areas and eventually seen well. Smaller Downy Woodpeckers were also shy at first but all who wanted to see one did in the end. Huge Pileated Woodpeckers were not quite as cooperative. Their loud laughing call was obvious at several points in the trip route but the birds only came out into view for a few of the birders. Beautiful Red-headed Woodpeckers perched out in the open at one point for everyone to enjoy. But woodpeckers were not the only non-songbirds around. A couple of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were cooperative with the males showing off their glittering gorgets. One lucky car full of birders got to enjoy close views (and photograph) a Greater Roadrunner! Roadrunners are a low density permanent resident in the piney woods of east Texas and are often seen along the roadsides.

Breeding songbirds are the real bread and butter of this trip and they did not disappoint. White-eyed Vireos called constantly from thickets while Red-eyed Vireos were more scarce but still visible. Access to Camp Waluta allowed the group to add Yellow-throated Vireo to the day list as well. Acadian Flycatchers, our local nesting Empid, were hard to find but this year but a couple of these non-descript little birds were still appreciated by the group. Beautiful Summer Tanagers put in appreciated appearances and a Great Crested Flycatcher was heard. A singing Eastern Wood-Pewee was a

nice surprise for the birders. Brown-headed Nuthatches with their squeaky-toy calls were seen in the pine trees while a couple of Gray Catbirds worked thickets. Carolina Chickadees and Tufted Titmice were well seen but a singing Wood Thrush remained hidden. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers mewed from several locations and Carolina Wrens gave their boisterous songs and calls from some of these same areas. An immature male Painted Bunting sang his heart out from a dead snag while his brilliant blue cousins, the Indigo Bunting and Blue Grosbeak were also enjoyed by the group. Eastern Towhees, scarce breeders in the southern reaches of the Big Thicket, sang from two different spots on the route but did not feel like popping out to give the group a look.

Warblers are of course a big focus of the Hardin County trip. With many species clad in bright colors and singing pretty songs, it is no wonder they are sought after by birders. Hooded Warblers were by far the most common encountered on the trip though the vast majority were heard only and not seen. A Kentucky Warbler was enjoyed by some of the birders but it just would not sit still for everyone to enjoy! Good looks were eventually had of Pine Warblers working in the tall pine trees while a Yellow-throated Warbler preferred to be heard only. Camp Waluta came through again with a Beautiful Prothonotary Warbler while Yellow-breasted Chats were common, easily heard and sometimes seen, in scrubby habitat in clear cut fields. And our two target warblers? They came though as well! Prairie Warbler was found almost immediately on the trip giving great looks to all and another was located later in the trip. Those shy Swainson's Warblers were not always so shy on this trip and several came out and gave great looks while singing from exposed perches. It's always nice when those target birds cooperate!

And that threatening rain? It held off until later in the day and the roads were never a problem. So despite dire predictions from the weatherman (again) another field trip was a big success. With eight species of breeding warblers located and multiple birds seen both colorful and cryptic, there is no doubt that the group will return next spring. Hopefully, the weather will hold off next year too!

The following species were noted by the field trip leaders:

Wood Duck(1); Yellow-crowned Night-Heron(1); Black Vulture(6); Turkey Vulture(10), Eurasian Collared-Dove(4); White-winged Dove(1); Mourning Dove(10); Greater Roadrunner(1); Yellow-billed Cuckoo(4); Chimney Swift(1); Ruby-throated Hummingbird(3); Red-headed Woodpecker(3); Red-bellied Woodpecker(3); Downy Woodpecker(2); Pileated Woodpecker(4); Eastern Wood-Pewee(1); Acadian Flycatcher(2); Great Crested Flycatcher(1); Scissor-tailed Flycatcher(3); White-eyed Vireo(15); Yellow-throated Vireo(1); Red-eyed Vireo(4); Blue Jay(6); American Crow(10); Fish Crow(2); Barn Swallow(2); Carolina Chickadee(4); Tufted Titmouse(3); Brown-headed Nuthatch(3); Carolina Wren(5); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher(5); Eastern Bluebird(1); Wood Thrush(1); Gray Catbird(2); Northern Mockingbird(5); European Starling(4); Prothonotary Warbler(1); Swainson's Warbler(4); Kentucky Warbler(1); Hooded Warbler(12); Pine Warbler(8); Yellow-throated Warbler(1); Prairie Warbler(2); Yellow-breasted Chat(6); Eastern Towhee(2); Summer Tanager(2); Northern Cardinal(20); Blue Grosbeak(1); Indigo Bunting(1); Painted Bunting(1); Common Grackle(3); Great-tailed Grackle(1); Brown-headed Cowbird(2); House Sparrow(4)

Steve Mayes

Bird Sightings – May 2015

In this section of the Newsletter, we now generally limit the report to birds justifiably shown as rare or very rare on the published Upper Texas Coast checklist 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 all credible 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.

Last month, we are unable to review sightings after about April 25. Most of the reports in the last few days of April were of good numbers of migrants in Sabine Woods that were nevertheless within their normal migration window. April 27 with ten Golden-winged Warblers, eight Blackburnians and 21 Ovenbirds among other species stands out with high numbers. May 11 saw 55 Magnolia Warblers, 20 Blackburnians and 23 Bay-breasted Warblers among many other species. As usual at this time of year, many birds are rare because they are "early" or "late" in reference to the Upper Texas Coast checklist. Details for most migrant species will be included in our annual migration summary in an upcoming issue of the Brown Pelican. Also, for a few species, we are unable to list all observers whose reports were reviewed. In most cases where no reason for the inclusion is given, it is because the species is regarded as "late" on that date. We have included flycatchers of the "Traill's" complex in cases where the observer indicated either Willow or Alder.

Seen in our core Counties (listed above)

American Wigeon	May 8	JEF-TP (1) Bmt Eagle-eyes
	May 9	JEF-TP (1) JHH (late)
Green-winged Teal	May 1	JEF (5) J Kestner, S Foster(late)
	May 1	JEF-TP(1) Brad Macurda (late)
Ring-necked Duck	May 1	JEF (5) J Kestner, S Foster(late)
Hooded Merganser	May 1	JEF (5) J Kestner, S.Foster(late)
Glossy Ibis	May 8	JEF-TP (1) Bmt Eagle-eyes
	May 9	JEF-TP (1) JHH (rare)
	May 13	JEF-TP (1) Joe Fischer (rare)
	May 27	JEF-TP (1) HS (rare)
American Golden-Plover	May 9	JEF-AggieDr (1) JAW, C.Sliiva
Piping Plover	May 1	JEF-SRSP (2) multiple obs
	May 2	JEF-SRSP (1) Pam Goolsby
	May 3	JEF-SRSP (1) JB, RL (late)
	May 9	JEF-SRSP (2) SM (late)
	May 22	JEF-SRSP (1) J Berner, Ken Hartman, Ron Weeks (v. late)
Stilt Sandpiper	May 22	JEF-TP (4) Ken Hartman (late)
Baird's Sandpiper	May 26	JEF-SRSP (1) Joe Fischer (late)
Wilson's Phalarope	May 22	JEF-TP (2) Ken Hartman (late)
Belted Kingfisher	May 1	JEF-SW (1) multiple obs (late)
	May 1	JEF-Edgewater (1) JB, RL (late)
	May 9	JEF-SW (1) SM
	May 19	HAI-Sandyland (1) Rich Kostecke
American Kestrel	May 1	JEF-northwest (1) Brad Macurda
	May 19, 20	HAI-Sandyland (1) Rich Kostecke
Peregrine Falcon	May 2	JEF-northwest (1) JB, RL (late)
	May 6	JEF-NW Beaumont (1) MC
	May 8	JEF-TP (1) JHH (late)
Yellow-bell. Flycatcher	May 2	JEF-SW (1) J. Berner (early)
	May 4	JEF-SW (1) JHH (early)
Alder Flycatcher	May 1	JEF-SW (1) Brad Macurda
	May 11	JEF-SW (1) JHH (called)
Willow Flycatcher	May 1	JEF-SW (1) Gary Binderim
	May 2	JEF-SW (1) Ron Weekls, Denise Dalley (called)
	May 3	JEF-SW (1) Tony Frank
	May 6	JEF-SW (1) Dean Gregory
Least Flycatcher	May 16	JEF-SW (1) SM (late)
Great Kiskadee	Apr 27	JEF-SW (1), JHH, JAW
Yellow-green Vireo	May 9	JEF-SW (1) MC, SM, HS
Philadelphia Vireo	May 16	JEF-SW (1) SM (late)
N Rough-wing. Swallow	May 16	JEF-McFaddin NWR (1) JB, RL

	May 22	JEF-Pilot Stn Rd (1) Ron Weeks
Golden-winged Warbler	May 2	JEF-SW (1) MC, TH, Imre Karafiath (rare on date)
	May 14	JEF-SW (2) JHH, HS (v rare)
Cape May Warbler	May 4	JEF-SW (1) JHH, HS (rare)
Bachman's Sparrow	May 20	HAI-Sandyland (1) Rich Kostecke
LeConte's Sparrow	May 1	JEF-Texas Pt NWR (1) SM
Nelson's Sparrow	May 1	JEF-Pilot Stn Rd (2) multiple obs
	May 2	JEF-Pilot Stn Rd (1) Christine Turnbull (late)
	May 3	JEF-Sabine Pass (4) SM, Eric Faria
	May 9	JEF-Pilot Stn Rd (7) SM
	May 9	JEF-Sabine Pass (2) SM
Scarlet Tanager	May 22	JEF-SW (1) Ron Weeks (late)
Yellow-headed Blackbird	May 2	JEF SRSP (1) Pam Goolsby
	May 7	JEF-SRSP (1) Charlie Curlee
Bronzed Cowbird	May 3	JEF-SW (1) Tony Frank
	May 3	JEF-Sabine Pass (1) JB, RL

Nearby Counties (very rare species only)

Red-breast. Merganser	May 9	CHA-ANWR(1) Cullen Hanks
Baird's Sandpiper	May 25	GAL-Bolivar Flats (1) Hank George
American Kestrel	May 16	CHA-ANWR (1) Muhammad Faizan
Alder Flycatcher	May 12	GAL-Smith Oaks (1) Dennis Shepler
N.Rough-wing. Swallow	May 9	CAM-Lighthouse Rd (1) multiple obs (late)
Golden-winged Warbler	May 8	GAL-Smith Oaks (2) Melissa Johnson (late) Brewer's Blackbird
	May 2	CHA (1) Candy McNamee
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	May 1	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Bill Baddley
	May 9	CAM-Lighthouse Rd (1) multiple

Abbreviations used: ANWR – Anahuac NWR; Bmt Eagle-eyes – Great Texas Birding Classic Big-Sit team; CAM – Cameron Parish, LA; CHA – Chambers County; GAL – Galveston County; HAI – Hardin County; HS – Harlan Stewart; JAW – John Whittle; JB – Jessica Barry; JEF – Jefferson County; JHH – John Haynes; MC – Michael Cooper; ORA – Orange county; RL – Randy Lewis; SRSP – Sea Rim State Park; SW – Sabine Woods; TH – Thomas Hellweg.

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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..>