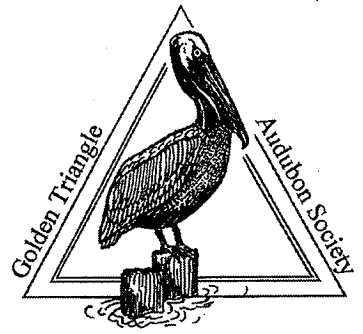


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 22 No. 5

May 2016

Membership Meeting
Thursday May 19, 2016 7:00 p.m.
Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont

Your favorite bird pictures

Following on the success of our November meeting, we are doing another program of members' favorite bird pictures. Dr. Harlan Stewart has again volunteered to prepare all photos submitted in advance into a Powerpoint presentation. Each member's pictures will be prefaced by an introductory "slide" giving the member's name, and any other relevant information the member wants. This could indicate where the pictures were taken, if all at the same place, or that information can be in the caption to each picture, along with other information such as the species of the bird. The contributors of the pictures may, if they desire, talk briefly about their pictures, or they can allow the pictures to stand on their own. The pictures should be bird related, but do not need to be exhibition quality, especially if the subject is especially interesting for any reason.

In order to prepare a combined presentation, we will need to have the pictures by Saturday May 14. They can be emailed as attachments to Harlan at hstewartmail@gt.rr.com. If necessary, send several separate emails to avoid exceeding the limits set by your email provider.

We will also be able to show Powerpoint presentations that you prepare yourself if they are on a flash drive, are in the Powerpoint 2003 Windows format, or are a series of jpg files. Newer versions of Powerpoint do allow you to save in the older format, but some of the additional features introduced since the 2003 version will not be retained.

The Brown Pelican

Vol. 22, No.5 May 2016
Issue number 228

Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Web Site for more information
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

Sherrie Roden (409-962-7911)

Vice-President

Dana Nelson (409-790-3286)

Treasurer

Harlan Stewart (409 727-4441)

Secretary

John Whittle (409-722-4193)

Directors-at-Large

Jessica Barry (409-781-3320)

Edra Bogucki (409-835-7245)

Howard Davis (409-720-9341)

Gerald Duhon (409-899-3368)

Sherry Gibson (409-385-6302)

John Haynes (409-724-6842)

Gary Kelley (409-697-2346)

Randy Lewis (409-617-1070)

John Mariani (985-373-5016)

Steve Mayes (409-722-5807)

Christine Sliva (409-782-1832)

Harlan Stewart (409) 727-4441

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Program

Jana Whittle (409-722-4193)

Field Trips

Steve Mayes (409-722-5807)

Conservation

Gary Kelley (409-697-2346)

Membership, Publicity

Sheila Hebert (409-767-1216)

Education

Volunteer needed

Webmaster

Jeff Pittman (geojeff@geojeff.org)

Facebook Administrators

John Mariani (985-373-5016)

Jana Whittle (409-722-4193)

Newsletter Distribution

Mary Stafford (409-460-3653)

Newsletter Editor

John Whittle (409-722-4193)

(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. 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 May 14, 2016. North American Migration Count. On International Migratory Bird Day, the Saturday of the second full weekend in May, we undertake an all-Jefferson-County Bird Count. We have been doing these counts since 1995. The count attempts to cover as much of Jefferson County as is reasonably possible. We welcome all participants, especially if you are able to count in the early morning from dawn through about 11:00 a.m. even if you would just like to cover your own neighborhood. It is not necessary to commit to the whole day. If you have special access to any areas within the county, we would appreciate your help! Contact John Whittle (johnawhittle@aol.com or 409-722-4193) for details or offers to help. Please note that this count takes place before the next membership meeting, so please let us know as soon as possible if you are able to help.

Thursday May 19, 2016. Membership Meeting. Members' favorite bird photos. Following on the success of our program last November, we plan another favorite bird pictures program. Details on page 1.

Saturday May 21, 2016 (tentative) Sabine Woods Work Day. We are planning a Work Day subject to conditions (weather, insect population) being acceptable. The large amount of rain in mid-April has resulted in luxuriant growth of both ground cover and shrubs. Please put this date on your calendar and help us if you can. On this work day, we plan to take care of trail mowing and other trail maintenance tasks so that we do not face too

daunting a task on our next work day in September. Particular needs as always are for riding mowers, but we will also need loppers to cut back the vegetation to prevent it encroaching on the trails. Sabine Woods is 4.1 miles west of Sabine Pass on Highway 87. We will start around 7:30 a.m. and work till about noon.

Saturday May 28, 2016. Field Trip to Hardin County. We will focus on the area north of Silsbee to look for the breeding birds of the area. This is typically a half-day trip. We plan to look for the nesting species of the area – Hooded, Kentucky, Pine, Prairie and Prothonotary, and Swainson's Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, White-eyed, Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireo, Indigo and Painted Bunting, Gray Catbird, Summer Tanager, Acadian Flycatcher, Brown-headed Nuthatch and others. Swainson's Warbler is a particular target of this trip. We have often been rewarded with excellent views of this normally very secretive species on this field trip. Yellow-breasted Chats have often been seen perched high up in the open. This area also has many breeding Prairie Warblers.

The meeting place will be at 7:00 a.m. (note the necessary early start if we are to find the breeding birds!) at the shopping center on the northeast corner of the intersection of FM92 and FM418 in the northern part of Silsbee. To reach this from Beaumont, take US 69 north and then US 96 north. Take Business 96 into and through downtown Silsbee. When Business 96 turns right, continue straight on FM92 for 3/4 mile to the shopping center. We normally finish sometime around noon or shortly after.



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.

Sponsor our Birdathon

It is still not too late to contribute to our Birdathon. Although as you will see on the following pages, we have already run this, we will still accept contributions. Once again you may be assured that all your contributions will stay close to home and be spent on local projects. Royce Pendergast and Ross Foreman were again the other members of the team.

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

This is our only GTAS-wide fund raising effort. We do not burden your mail or email box with any other appeals. GTAS is financially very healthy, but we are hoping to perhaps purchase a small but important piece of land adjoining Sabine Woods to add to and enhance the value of the Woods as an important migratory stopover in both spring and fall for Neotropical migrant songbirds on their way from their wintering grounds to their breeding

Checks should be made out to Golden Triangle Audubon Society and all contributions are, of course, tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. Please contact me at 3015 Nashville Ave, Nederland, TX 77627 or at johnawhittle@aol.com or 409-722-4193 with your pledges. Thank you very much for your continuing support.

John A. Whittle

Golden Triangle Audubon on Facebook

In case you didn't know, Golden Triangle Audubon Society has joined the world of social media with its own Facebook page! Our page was started about two years ago by Kelley Sampeck, and we are grateful to her for doing this because it allows us to post immediate news of bird sightings and events of interest in our area, which includes all of the Golden Triangle and counties north to the lakes. Since Kelley has been out of the country for a while, Jana Whittle and John Mariani have taken over administration of the page. Here are things you can find on our GTAS FB page:

- Information on monthly meeting dates and topics.
- Reports on what happened at the monthly meeting.
- Monthly field trip times and locations.
- Field trip tidbits, including noteworthy bird sightings.
- Notices of upcoming Sabine Woods work days.
- Reports of interesting local bird sightings and rarities.
- Reports from Sabine Woods during migration.
- Reports of unusual birds seen during Christmas Counts.
- Links to Regional Migration Forecasts.
- Links to the website www.goldentriangleaudubon.org, which has our Brown Pelican newsletters and other valuable information.
- A place to put your local bird photos.
- A place for your comments, questions, or to report your own bird sightings.

Please visit our page and "like it" to receive notification whenever new information is posted. The link to our Facebook page is <https://www.facebook.com/GoldenTriangleAudubon/>

Electronic Delivery of the *Brown Pelican*

As we indicated last month we have been having issues with delays in delivery of printed copies of the *Brown Pelican*. We have decided to bite the bullet and mail copies by first class mail to ensure timely delivery. We certainly do not want to cut off any members who are unable to receive a copy electronically. At the same time, if you are able to receive an electronic copy, you can also save us both expense and volunteer time.

When we email a copy to a member, we do that by attaching a copy of the Newsletter in pdf format to an email.

How to request a change to electronic delivery.

Simply send an email to johnawhittle@aol.com giving the name and address that we are using to mail the *Brown Pelican* to you (so we can find your record) and confirm that we may email the *Brown Pelican* to you as an attachment at the email address you are using to send the message to us.

Renewals now Due

Membership in Golden Triangle Audubon is on a calendar year basis, running from January to December each year. Members of National Audubon Society who live in our official chapter territory, Jefferson, Hardin and Orange Counties are automatically members of Golden Triangle Audubon. For members in our territory, we do request a contribution of \$15 per year. Others, including members of National Audubon who live outside our territory, may become members of Golden Triangle Audubon and receive membership benefits by paying the yearly \$15 membership fee.

Membership dues may be paid by mailing a check to Golden Triangle Audubon at PO Box 1292, Nederland, Texas 77627-1292. A convenient membership blank to provide your name and address is on the back page of each issue of the *Brown Pelican*, or may be included on a separate piece of paper enclosed with your check, (or we will use the name and address on your check).

Field Trip to Sabine Woods – 23 April 2016

April, for birders in southeast Texas, is like the Super Bowl, March Madness, and Christmas all rolled into one. It is the heart of spring migration and southeast Texas is one of the best places in the country to take it in. Is it any wonder that the Golden Triangle Audubon Society's April field trip to Sabine Woods is one of the most anticipated of the year? But spring migration can be fickle, even at the best migrant trap on the Texas coast at the peak of migration. This field trip in the past has produced spectacular days and spectacularly slow days. So would it be boom or bust in 2016?

The answer came pretty quickly and it was exactly what all of the assembled birders wanted to hear – there were lots of birds. As is traditional with this well attended trip, the birders split into two groups with experienced birders in each, and headed to different parts of the woods. On some spring days, the birds may mostly assemble in one section of woods but not on this day! Good birds occupied every section of woods! The total number of birds was not overwhelming as in fallout situations but the diversity was fantastic!

Warblers are the stars of the spring migration spectacle at Sabine Woods and they did not disappoint. A Yellow Warbler was one of the first sighted, near the entrance to the woods but it was far from the last. Black and White Warblers crept along branches and Hooded Warblers flitted through the undergrowth. Howard's water feature produced Northern Waterthrush as usual. The main canopy was alive with birds, with multiple fiery throated Blackburnian Warblers lighting up the oaks. Ovenbird poked through the leaf litter on the ground while Worm-eating Warblers probed the dead leaves still on the trees. Sky blue Cerulean Warbler males and seafoam females were gleaning insects from the leaves along with black and yellow Magnolia Warblers. American Redstarts did their flycatching routines while Kentucky Warblers stuck to the ground. A lovely Bay-breasted Warbler and Prothonotary Warbler were located by one group while the other group discovered elegant Yellow-throated Warbler and Nashville Warbler. Truly something for everyone!

Less common warblers were also located on the day. The normal migration route of Blackpoll Warblers takes them through Florida in the spring and they can be hard to locate this far west in some years. Not this year! Golden-winged Warblers are never particularly common on the upper Texas coast but can usually be found at the peak of the season with some effort. That proved true on this day with lovely males located. The closely related Blue-winged Warbler is much more common but was also appreciated by the birders. But, even more appreciated, was a more unusual bird. This bird had the facial pattern of a Blue-winged Warbler but the body pattern of a Golden-winged Warbler. This confusing mixture of traits spells Brewster's Warbler! Originally described as a separate species, we now know that Brewster's Warbler is, in fact, the result of hybridization between Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers. From the descriptions of the birds by the different groups, it is likely that there were actually two different Brewster's Warblers present with slightly different plumage variants.

But warblers were not the only migrants present. Summer

Tanagers and Scarlet Tanagers were present in brilliant red while Baltimore and Orchard Orioles countered in orange and black. Thrushes are not as colorful but, with Swainson's, Gray-cheeked, Wood and Veery present, they were still appreciated. Gray Catbirds were common throughout the woods and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds defended the lantana bushes and coral bean plants from each other. Vireos were also well represented with White-eyed, Red-eyed, Warbling and Philadelphia all present. Eastern Kingbirds were easily seen and Great Crested Flycatchers were easily heard! Eastern Wood-Pewees were obvious on exposed perched while Acadian Flycatchers were a little more shy. Indigo Buntings worked the woodland edges and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks picked hackberries and mulberries from the trees.

But Sabine Woods is just one spot (albeit the best one) in the Sabine Pass area and other spots also held great birds. Texas Point National Wildlife Refuge has been excellent all this spring. An active, tail-bobbing western Palm Warbler was a highlight of the spot but Northern Parula and Chestnut-sided Warblers were also present and always nice to see. Two cooperative Groove-billed Anis were a treat for birders and photographers alike, it seems to have been an especially good year for sightings of this species. The mulberry and salt cedar clumps west of Sabine Woods can also hold good birds and migration and, on this day, managed to produce both Black-billed Cuckoo and a beautiful male Western Tanager.

One could go on for quite some time on all of the great sightings of the day - Peregrine Falcon, Crested Caracara, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Tennessee Warbler and more! But however many species each birder saw, all can agree that it was a great day, one of the best field trips ever! Will April of 2017 top this? Come next year and see for yourself!

The following species (and probably more) were seen.

Sabine Woods: Little Blue Heron, Green Heron, Crested Caracara, Peregrine Falcon, Sora, Black-necked Stilt, Laughing Gull, White-winged Dove, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Common Nighthawk, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Chimney Swift, Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Red-bellied/Golden-fronted Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy Woodpecker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Acadian Flycatcher, Traill's Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Kingbird, White-eyed Vireo, Yellow-throated Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, Tree Swallow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Veery, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Wood Thrush, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, Ovenbird, Worm-eating Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Golden-winged Warbler, Brewster's hybrid Warbler, Blue-winged Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Hooded Warbler, American Redstart, Cerulean Warbler, Northern Parula, Magnolia Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Palm Warbler, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Canada Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager, Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, Red-winged Blackbird, Great-tailed Grackle, Orchard Oriole, Baltimore Oriole.

Sea Rim SP Mulberries: Black-billed Cuckoo, Western Tanager.

Texas Point NWR: Groove-billed Ani, Palm Warbler.

Bird Sightings – April 2016

For this column, we review, looking for rare and very rare species, 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 review, looking for very rare or vagrant species only, records for Chambers, Galveston (High Island and Bolivar only) and Liberty counties in Texas, and Calcasieu and Cameron Parishes (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 sometimes a comment on the reason it is noteworthy other than being a rare species for the area.

Commentary: April is a very difficult month to compile! Many Neotropical migrants have relatively narrow migration "windows" and so a species can be "very rare" one week, but perhaps only "uncommon" the next. However, we feel it is

important to monitor birds that are migrating earlier than in the past. The checklists we use are broken down by week, but even then, a bird which qualifies for mention as rare one day could be simply uncommon the next day, because the next day is in the next week of the month. There are also some issues with identification with so many out of area birders contributing. We do have to exercise some judgment with some easily confused species that we know from experience are often misidentified. Sometimes it is just a question of a good birder almost subconsciously identifying a bird as a species they are used to seeing in numbers in their home area. However, Willow and Alder Flycatchers can only be separated if they call, which, unfortunately they rarely do in migration. A contemporaneous report of a species rare for the location and date should always be accompanied by some comment or details, if only to indicate that the bird was identified with due regard to the rarity of the species at that location on that date.

Seen in our Core Counties (listed above)

Cinnamon Teal	Apr 17	JEF-TP (1) HS (late)
Magnificent Frigatebird	Apr 18	JEF (reported as SW, but presumably offshore) (1) Roger Clark
Northern Gannet	Apr 8	JEF-SRSP (presumably offshore) (6) Mike Doyen (late)
Whooping Crane	Apr 5-11+	HAI (1) JM (from Louisiana flock – since returned to Louisiana.
Buff-breasted Sandpiper	Apr 6	JEF-Lawhon Rd (2) Shelli Ellerbe (early)
Common Ground-Dove	Apr 7	JEF-Aggie Drive (4) JHH, JAW
	Apr 18	JEF-Texas Pt NWR (3) Sara Fostello (3) (no details)
	April 20	JEF-TX73 (3) Steven Smith (no details)
Groove-billed Ani	Apr 8	JEF-Texas Pt NWR (1) Barbara Stewman
	Apr 23	JEF-Texas Pt NWR (2) mult obs
	Apr 26	JEF-Texas Pt NWR (3) Steve Dillinger
Black-chinned Humm.	Apr 4-5	JEF-Nederland (1) SM
Great Kiskadee	Apr 22	JEF-SRSP Mulberries (1) JJW, JHH et al.
Olive-sided Flycatcher	Apr 14	JEF-SW (1) JHH, JAW et al (very early)
Alder Flycatcher	Apr 24	JEF-SW (1) Bill Tarbox (early, no details, but reported call heard)
Willow Flycatcher	Apr 17	JEF-SW (1) Roger Clark (early) (no details)
	Apr 19	JEF-SW (1) Bryan Shirley (no details)
	Apr 22	JEF-SW (1) "The Birding Project" (unconvincing details)
Traill's Flycatcher	Apr 13	JEF-SW (1) JAW, JHH (early)
	Apr 17	JEF-SW (1) multiple obs (early)
Black capped Vireo	Apr 2	JEF-SW (1) Craig Weisiger (photo) et al. (continuing bird)
Veery	Apr 10	JEF-SW (1) Caleb Gordon
	Apr 13 (1)	JEF-SW (1) multiple obs
Louisiana Waterthrush	Apr 24	JEF-SW (1) JHH, TH, Rob Thacker (late)
	Apr 25	JEF-SW (1) JAW
	Apr 13	JEF-SW (1) JHH, MC, Ron Berwick et al. (very early)
Cape May Warbler	Apr 20	JEF-SW (1) JHH
Cerulean Warbler	Apr 8	JEF-SW (2) JHH, MC, TH, JAW

Canada Warbler	Apr 9	JEF-SW (1) JHH, MC, JAW et al
	Apr 10	JEF-SW (1) multiple obs
	Apr 12	JEF-SW (2) JHH, Caleb Gordon
	Apr 13	JEF-SW (1) multiple obs
	Apr 19	JEF-SW (1) JHH, MC, Dennis Shepler, JAW et al
Western Tanager	Apr 16	JEF-SW (1 fem) JHH, JAW, Royce Pendergast, Ross Foreman
	Apr 20-22+	JEF-SRSP (1 male) Steve Dillinger et al
	Apr 25-26	JEF-SWJ (1 make) JAW et al.
Pyrrhuloxia	Apr 14	JEF-Old Sabine Cemetery (1) JAW

Nearby Counties (very rare species only)

Brown Booby	Apr 15	CAM-Calcasieu Ship Channel (2) Katie Barnes
	Apr 20	CHA-ANWR (1) Ellen Smith, Kenneth Zaslow
Black Rail	Apr 22	CAM-Lighthouse Rd (1 heard) Andre Moncrieff et al.
Red-cock, Woodpecker	Apr 7	NEW- N off RR255 opposite CR1090 (4) Kris Falco
Sulphur-bell. Flycatcher	Apr 19	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Van Remsen, Mac Myers, Dan Lane
Traill's Flycatcher	Apr 10	GAL-SO (1) Tyler Miloy (early) (no details)
	Apr 12	GAL-HI (1) Ron Johnson, Linda Tozer (early), (no details)
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	Apr 14	HAL-Boy Scout Woods (1) Robert Finer (early) (no details)
	Apr 19-22	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Van Remsen, Mac Myers, Dan Lane et al.
Bachman's Sparrow	Apr 3	TYL-Sundew Trail (3) Dennis Shepler

Abbreviations used: ANG – Angelina County; ANWR – Anahuac NWR; BTNP – Big Thicket National Preserve; CAL – Calcasieu Parish; CAM – Cameron Parish, LA; CHA – Chambers County; GAL – Galveston County; HAI – Hardin County;; HI – High Island; HS – Harlan Stewart; JAW – John Whittle; JB – Jessica Barry, JEF – Jefferson County; JHH – John Haynes; JJW – Jana and John Whittle; JM – John Mariani; MC – Michael Cooper; NEW – Newton County; RL – Randy Lewis; SM – Steve Mayes, SW – Sabine Woods; TH – Thomas Hellweg TP – Tyrrell Park including Cattail Marsh; TYL – Tyler County; WJC – West Jefferson County.

Birdathon – 16 April 2016

(We are publishing here an abridged version of our Birdathon report in the hope that you may find it interesting to see where we found the various species.)

This year's Birdathon was run a little earlier than in recent years, principally for scheduling reasons, but this did not seem to matter. So on April 16, Royce Pendergast, Ross Foreman and I started out from Beaumont just before dawn to find as many species as possible before nightfall. The weather was acceptable, a little windy, but the rain threatened by the forecasters held off until after dark. The total number of species recorded was 147.

We were almost in Hardin County before it was light enough to identify birds, but a few **Great-tailed Grackles** and **European Starlings** were active along the highway in North Beaumont. Leaving the completely urban area of Beaumont, we found two **American Crows** and two **Black Vultures**, up surprisingly early for that species, in Lumberton. On towards Silsbee, we added **White-winged Doves**, **Northern Mockingbird**, **Chimney Swift**, **Mourning Dove**, **Yellow-crowned Night-Heron** and **Northern Cardinal**.

Leaving residential areas, we proceeded six or so miles up FM 92 to the famous Gore Store Road, a "cross-country" road through excellent bird habitat. Much of the birding along this road is by ear, as the trees and bushes provide lots of cover, probably the prime attraction of the area to the species breeding there. **White-eyed Vireos** are certainly the most vocal, and clearly present in significant numbers. Many of the birds glimpsed as they flitted through the dense roadside bushes were doubtless of this species. **Hooded Warblers** were also there in numbers, and the resident Northern Cardinals added to the calls. Along the eastern part of the road, we saw on **Eastern Bluebird**, heard a **Red-eyed Vireo**, a **Common Yellowthroat**, and several **Pine Warblers**. One of the specialties of the area is the **Prairie Warbler**, which nests almost exclusively in pines between eight and perhaps 15 feet tall. It was surprising that we had not seen a **Blue Jay** earlier, but one put in an appearance. **Great Crested Flycatcher** is the common flycatcher of the area, and we saw one and heard another. **Yellow-breasted Chats** are quite common in the area, but except for a short period a little later on the spring, very unwilling to come into the open. We heard only one. As we moved further east along Gore Store Road we heard one of the elusive **Swainson's Warblers**, and later another. Swainson's Warblers are perhaps the most skulking of the North American warblers, but have bred in the Beech Creek bottoms for many years now. Another bottomland species of the area is the **Acadian Flycatcher**, with its characteristic explosive call, and one was heard calling from the creek south of the road. We did also hear a **Summer Tanager**, even though they seem to be a little late arriving this year, and some **Carolina Chickadees**, a permanent resident of the area. We duly noted a **Great Blue Heron**, a species we almost missed last year, despite this being a very common species.

Partly retracing our route, we turned down Firetower Road. Additional species seen and heard there were **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**, **Red-bellied Woodpecker**, and, alas, a **Brown-headed Cowbird**. We drove along the first mile or so of the road to Camp Waluta, and saw our first **Turkey Vulture** of

the day, a **Loggerhead Shrike**, and the first **Cattle Egrets** of the day. Returning to Firetower Road, we heard innumerable additional **White-eyed Vireos** and **Hooded Warblers**, and at least four **Carolina Wrens**. Two **Tree Swallows** flew over, and we saw and heard many more of the species we had seen along Gore Store Road. The southern part of Firetower Road has a few dwellings, and we added **House Sparrow**, **Red-tailed Hawk** and **Brown Thrasher** to our list.

Our next objective was a ballpark in the northern part of Silsbee, where there have always been **Red-headed Woodpeckers**. We had nearly reached the area on Bryant Road we were heading for, but quickly pulled into a side road off FM92 when a **Swallow-tailed Kite** flew over. Arriving at the ballpark, we searched for the woodpeckers. We thought we had one on a distant light pole, but it flew towards us, revealing its identity as a **Northern Flicker**, not a species we were expecting there. We also had **Inca Doves** and **Purple Martins** when finally, a nice adult **Red-headed Woodpecker** flew in and perched quite low just in front of us. To cap off our visit, a small flock of about seven **Cedar Waxwings** flew over.

Heading towards the Nature Conservancy's Sandylands Sanctuary along Highway 327, another **Swallow-tailed Kite** flew over. Reaching the Sanctuary, we immediately heard **Brown-headed Nuthatch** calls coming from high in the pine trees, but it took a while before we were able to see one. Two **Mississippi Kites** flew over. An oak tree festooned with Spanish Moss harbored a **Northern Parula**, a species that favors Spanish Moss for nesting. A **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** zipped by. Based on last year's experience, we drove down to the boat ramp on the west side of the creek. There was a healthy sized flock of swallows gathering mud for nesting, and we quickly and easily found at least six **Cave Swallows** in among at least a dozen **Cliff Swallows**. We also heard, finally, a **Pileated Woodpecker**, a **Tufted Titmouse**, and a **Yellow-throated Vireo**.

The nearby Hardin County Airport is an oasis of grass, mowed but still four to six inches tall, otherwise surrounded by trees. On this day, in addition to the inevitable **Killdeer**, the 120 swallows on the wires were **Tree Swallows**. A nice male **Indigo Bunting** was perhaps expected, as they nest in the area, but two **Upland Sandpipers**, although certainly not totally unexpected, were nice to find nonetheless.

Next we headed towards west Jefferson County. Highway 326 south to Sour Lake produced another **Pileated Woodpecker**, an **Eastern Kingbird**, a nice flyover by a **Sharp-shinned Hawk** and a **Eurasian Collared Dove** in addition to more examples of several species we had already seen. Old Beaumont Road in Hardin County was quite birdy, but a **House Wren** was the only new species.

Continuing across Pine Island Bayou into Jefferson County, we drove down North China Road, seeing and hearing many of the normal birds of the area. More of the same along Westbury Road, but we did add an **American Robin**. Turning onto Aggie Drive, we were a little disappointed to find that

fields that had held shorebirds a few days earlier had been drained and were drying out. Most of the birds had moved on, but there were **Blue-winged Teal** and a **Mottled Duck**, one **Greater Yellowlegs** and two **Upland Sandpipers**. Our first **Red-winged Blackbirds** and **Great Egret** were there.

McDermand Road has been the best shore-birding road in West Jefferson County over the past few weeks, and we were not disappointed. We saw a **Crested Caracara** flying in the medium distance, and a female **Northern Harrier**. The wet fields had lots of **Lesser** (and **Greater**) **Yellowlegs**, some **Semi-palmated Plovers** and **Least Sandpipers**, but the prize find was eight **American Golden-Plovers**. A **White-crowned Sparrow**, not always easy to find by mid-April was nice, while there were, as usual **Savannah Sparrows** in some numbers. Moving further south along the road, we passed a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** and then two Eastern Kingbird As always, **Long-billed Dowitchers** were the predominant species in the wet fields, but there were lots of **Black-necked Stilts** and good numbers of **Dunlin**. There were lots of **Blue-winged Teal**, a few **Mottled Duck**, **Northern Shoveler**, and **Black-bellied Whistling Ducks**. But we really wanted to find the less common species. **Black-bellied Plover** are not unusual, but they normally prefer the beach areas, not the inland mud, so the few there were a little out of place. We soon found a couple of **Pectoral Sandpipers**, perhaps a little scarce in migration this year. Then four larger birds in the medium distance garnered our attention, and they were soon determined to be **Hudsonian Godwits**, rather early for that normally late-migrating species, and, perhaps not surprisingly, still in basic (winter) winter plumage. A **Whimbrel** flew by in the far distance. Then, we found a small shorebird swimming in circles – a female **Wilson's Phalarope**. Closer review found five males in the same area. Careful close examination of the first of two dark Ibis revealed a brown eye, and light blue-gray facial skin in front of the eye, but none behind the eye, clearly establishing it as a **Glossy Ibis**. The other one had a red eye, so we needed to look no further to call it a **White-faced Ibis**. While we were reviewing this field, a **Swainson's Hawk** flew over, and we heard distant Cedar Waxwings.

Pressing on, we headed down FM365, and were surprised to see an **Osprey** fly over the road, a long way away from any substantial body of water. On Interstate 10 we did see our first **Boat-tailed Grackle** and a flying **Little Blue Heron**. Entering Tyrrell Park, we picked up our first **Downy Woodpecker** – where were all the ones in the Big Thicket? – and lots of **Laughing Gulls** flying up Hillebrandt Bayou towards the local landfill. One of the big attractions at Tyrrell Park is the **Bald Eagles**. We saw two adults flying east of the Marsh, but could not see the chick we know is there. A good number of **American Avocets** were feeding in the nearby cell, and, as always, there were **Black-necked Stilts** and our first **White Ibis** of the day. A good number of **Blue-winged Teal** were present, and also about ten **Green-winged Teal**. Six **Roseate Spoonbills** were hard to miss. **Long-billed Dowitchers** were the only true shorebirds we saw, but there were **American Coot**, **Common Gallinules**, one **Tricolored Heron**, a **Snowy Egret** and a **Pied-billed Grebe**. **Marsh Wren** and **Soras** could be heard call from among the reeds. A **Red-shouldered Hawk** called in the distance, while two individuals of Tyrrell Park's specialties – **Fish Crow** – flew over.

After a quick stop for lunch, it was time to head south towards the coast. Our feeders in Nederland were being visited by a female **House Finch**. The road to Sabine Pass produced **Willet**, **Neotropic Cormorant**, and **Forster's Tern** en route, and also another **Red-tailed Hawk** and two **Swainson's Hawk**. Seeing a duck in Keith Lake near the boat ramp, we were surprised to find it was a female **Red-breasted Merganser**. Sabine Pass itself was somewhat wet from rains in the preceding days, and so a **Clapper Rail** was really no surprise. We had seen a distant **Whimbrel** earlier in the day, but the three in Sabine Pass yards gave close views as they fed.

Sabine Woods can be alive with migrants, or it can harbor very few, or it can be anywhere in between. There were enough migrants in the Woods to keep us busy non-stop for an hour and a half. One of the highlights was two **Peregrine Falcons** noisily interacting in flight over the Woods. **Tanagers** were especially numerous, with **Scarlet Tanagers** probably slightly outnumbering **Summer Tanagers**, mostly males of both species. But then one female, looking otherwise similar to a **Summer Tanager**, was observed to have two yellowish wing bars indicating it was a female **Western Tanager**, a rare sighting on the Upper Texas coast. There were **Orchard and Baltimore Orioles**, **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** and both **Swainson's** and **Gray-cheeked Thrushes**. **Gray Catbirds** and a **Brown Thrasher** were seen. The only "small" flycatcher was an **Eastern Wood-Pewee**. It is, of course, the warblers that are the principal draw at the Woods, and there was quite a good selection. **Black-and-white Warblers** are almost always there on any day in April, but **Cerulean and Magnolia Warblers** less so. A **Magnolia Warbler** was early, as the species is one of the later migrating warblers. We had already recorded **Northern Parula** and **Hooded Warbler**, but **American Redstart** and **Yellow Warbler** were additions to the list. A **Common Nighthawk** was seen perched on a high oak branch. There was a flock of **Cedar Waxwings**.

At this point, we decided we had to make a quick trip to the beach and McFaddin Refuge. Because of strong south winds, the beach was essentially undrivable. We did find **Sanderling**, **Ring-billed** and **Herring Gulls**, **Royal Terns** and **Brown Pelicans**, but many of the other beach species, particularly the smaller plovers were not visible. McFaddin had more of the common species but including another **Indigo Bunting**, many more **Marsh Wrens**, and a **Northern Harrier**, but new were two **Green Herons** and a **Gull-billed Tern**.

Driving back along Highway 87 passing the area of Salt Cedars and (now) lone Mulberry tree which was so productive in pre-Hurricane Ike days, we did see another **Summer Tanager** and another **Orchard Oriole**, and did add two **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** and a male **Blue Grosbeak** as well as more **Indigo Buntings** and a **Gray Catbird**. Less expected, but welcome nonetheless was a **Black-crowned Night-Heron**.

We spent to remaining ninety minutes of daylight back at Sabine Woods. New warblers included a female **Prothonotary Warbler**, and a **Northern Waterthrush**. Two male **Painted Buntings** were attracting as lot of attention, as they always do. Somehow, and we know there were many there, we had not laid eyes on a **Wood Thrush**, but that was remedied quickly. A **Barn Owl**, roosting high over the trees in the eastern woods, was an appropriate ending to the day.

John A. Whittle

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

FIRST CLASS MAIL

NATIONAL AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP FORM

Membership Form

To join the National Audubon Society, please complete this form and return with Introductory Membership fee of \$20 (payable to the National Audubon Society, or indicate you wish to be billed) to National Audubon Society, Memberships, 225 Varick St, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10014. To use this form to give a membership as a gift, please complete the form and indicate your name in the appropriate space. Payment should accompany gift memberships.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Gift from: _____

Check enclosed Please bill me

Golden Triangle Audubon C6ZW250Z

Brown Pelican SUBSCRIPTION/ MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please complete this form or include the information on or with your check. Mail to Golden Triangle Audubon Society, P. O. Box 1292, Nederland, Texas 77627-1292 or bring to any Membership Meeting. Subscriptions from National Audubon members with mailing addresses outside our official territory, and others wishing to subscribe are \$15 per year (Jan-Dec). Members with addresses within our official territory are also asked to contribute \$15 if they are able.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel No: _____

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..>