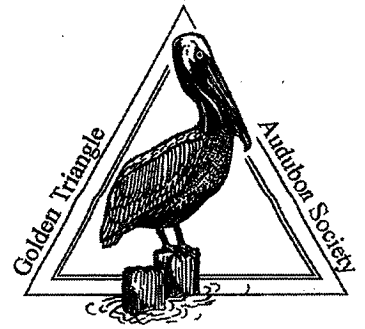


# The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 23 No. 1

January 2017

**Membership Meeting**  
**Thursday January 19, 2017 7:00 p.m.**  
**Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont**

**Red Wolves**  
**Edward Craven**

Historically, red wolves ranged from Eastern Texas to Florida and South Carolina. It is safe to say that red wolves roamed throughout Eastern Texas through the early 1970s. Unfortunately, by the early eighties, red wolves were being genetically swamped by coyotes invading from the West. Ground Zero included East Harris County, Chambers County, and extreme Southwest Louisiana.

As one of the very first test cases of the new Endangered Species Act, the red wolf was saved by dedicated red wolf champions. Animals were darted, tranquilized, and genetically tested. By 1980, only fourteen pure red wolves remained, including the last mated pair captured in Sabine Pass. These animals were taken to a breeding facility in North Carolina and subsequently released into the wild on the Albemarle Peninsula. Learn about the clever and innovative techniques developed to save these charismatic predators.

Mr. Craven is a Board member at Armand Bayou Nature Center in Houston, Texas. He is a Certified Texas Master Naturalist with the Gulf Coast Chapter. The Nature Center protects over 2,500 acres of rare tall grass prairie along the Gulf Coast.

Mr. Craven has a Bachelor of Biology degree from the University of Texas and studied at the Marine Science Institute in Port Aransas prior to earning an M.B.A in finance from USC.

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*

Vol. 23, No.1 January 2017  
Issue number 235

### Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Web Site for more information  
[www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://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](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org). Confirmation of the location will also normally be available at the Membership Meeting that is usually, but not always, two days prior to each trip, or by contacting Field Trip Committee chair, Steve Mayes at 409-722-5807 or [sgmayes@hotmail.com](mailto:sgmayes@hotmail.com).*

**Thursday January 19, 2017. Membership Meeting.** Edward Craven on Red Wolves. Full details on p.1

**Saturday January 21, 2017. Field Trip.** This will be to Cattail Marsh in Tyrrell Park, Beaumont. 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 from the boardwalk 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 on the boardwalk 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 essentially 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 Tyrrell Park From the South**

Go "north" on US69/96/287 around the south side of Beaumont.

Take Texas 124 (south or west, whichever it is signed) 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 3/4 mile.

Turn left into Tyrrell Park through the nice new arch.

Almost immediately turn left at the conservatory into the parking lot for the Garden Center.

#### **From IH10**

Exit at Walden Road on the west side

of Beaumont.

Go south of Walden Road for about 3mile to the first light.

At the light go straight over Highway 124 onto Tyrrell Park Road and go about 3/4 mile.

Turn left into Tyrrell Park through the nice new arch.

Almost immediately turn left at the conservatory into the parking lot for the Garden Center.

**Thursday February 16, 2017. Membership Meeting.** Speaker: Gerald Duhon.

**Saturday February 18, 2017. Field Trip to Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge, Louisiana.** The meeting place will be at 9:00 a.m. in the parking lot of the Headquarters/Maintenance Area of the Refuge, which is on Louisiana Highway 27 about 20 miles south of IH10. The best route from IH-10 is by means of Highway 397 (east of Lake Charles) to Highway 14 to Highway 27. Note that Highway 27 west of the Calcasieu Channel connects with the portion east of the Channel only by means of the small Cameron ferry, and cannot be relied on to reach the Refuge. The Headquarters complex has no visitor facilities, and no public toilets, but has a large parking lot where vehicles may be left after carpooling is accomplished. From mid-county, it is 26 miles to the Sabine River bridge on IH-10, 38 miles on IH-10 to Highway 397, and 20 miles from there to the Refuge. Travel time from mid-county is about 1 hour 45 minutes. We will have to rely on the two small convenience stores some distance north of the Refuge for toilets



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# Christmas Bird Count Reports

*As we write this, Christmas Count season is all but over. Fortunately, none of the local counts had totally unbirdable weather, and the worst any count had to endure was stronger winds than they would have desired. We present here very brief reports, which are unofficial and may not be complete. We will, space permitting, have fuller reports on the counts Golden Triangle Audubon sponsors or is deeply involved in in future issues, and we will post full count spreadsheets and narrative accounts on our web page at [www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org) as soon as we are able.*

## Johnson Bayou – 14 December 2016

This count is very fortunate to have the cooperation of local landowners including the Gray Estate, Doré Energy and Crane Brothers. This allows coverage of the very extensive areas of marsh that are not accessible to birders any other time of the year. We were told that the warm weather conditions had apparently delayed the arrival of many of the waterfowl. Notable finds among the 119 species seen included a Bell's Vireo and a Say's Phoebe (likely a bird returning for a second year).

## Turkey Creek -- 17 December 2016

The Turkey Creek Christmas Bird Count was held on what turned out to be a very windy day. The total number of species seen was 61, a rather disappointing number and the lowest since 2007. The number of individual birds was also very low, about one-half of the number in good years, and follows a lean year last year. The birding in the count circle during the afternoon was very slow. Noteworthy was the finding of both Purple Finch (two birds on the Kirby Nature Trail) and Fox Sparrow (one on the Turkey Creek Trail south of Gore Store Road).

## Beech Creek – 20 December 2016

The weather was very favorable for birding. While close to freezing in the early morning, there was little wind and a good deal of sunshine during the day. The total number of species observed, 84, was reasonably normal, and much increased over last year's poor showing. The total number of birds found on this count is highly dependent on the number of American Coots on Steinhagen Lake; this year it was not very high.

Four unusual species were recorded. An American Woodcock flushed in the early morning from the picnic area where we met. A Louisiana Waterthrush was found along the shore of the lake in Magnolia Ridge Campground. This is a very unusual species for the area in winter. A Fox Sparrow was seen along County Road 150 near the southern tip of Steinhagen Lake. A male House Finch was seen in Camper's Cove Park on the Tyler County side of Steinhagen Lake.

## Bolivar Peninsula – 22 Dec. 2016

This count is fortunate to have a good variety of habitats from beach to the High Island woodlots to the extensive marshes of the High Island oilfields and Anahuac NWR. The count was held in good weather, and the total number of species seen was about 166. It will probably be remembered

for the extensive list of rarities seen. Two Long-tailed Ducks were seen in the High Island oilfield, a Brown Booby was reported from the beach. Glossy Ibis and Purple Gallinule were both in Shoveler Pond at Anahuac NWR. Smith Oaks in High Island produced two Lesser Nighthawks and an unprecedented MacGillivray's Warbler. A Cave Swallow was detected among the Tree Swallows in High Island, two Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were seen, one in High Island, and the other along the entrance road to Anahuac NWR, which also was the location of a Least Flycatcher. Rounding off the list were two species not quite as unexpected – a Bronzed Cowbird and some Redheads.

## Sea Rim SP – 29 December 2016

The Sea Rim State Park CBC was run on 29 December on a day when a strong north wind developed with a cloud ceiling of approximately 4,000 ft in the early morning giving way to clear skies by mid-morning. The temperature was in the sixties throughout the daylight hours. The wind may have kept birds on the ground, and the total number of species seen, 150, was on the low side of normal. As with most count in the area, sparrow numbers remained low, as they have been all fall. However, it was nice to find four Whimbrels along the muddy "beach" along with seven Long-billed Curlews. Two American Woodcocks were the first seen on this count since 2011; this species has been found on many local counts this year.

Groove-billed Anis seem to be increasing locally, and this was the second consecutive year that we found this species on count day. Finding a Short-eared Owl in the count circle may require pre-dawn observation along Highway 87, which we did this year for the first time in several years.

Vermilion Flycatcher numbers continue to slowly increase, and a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher sighting was not as much of a surprise as it would have been if there had not been sightings in Chambers and Galveston Counties on Christmas counts there. A Couch's Kingbird at the end of Backridge Road was in the same location as one last year, and may have been a returning or remaining bird.

## Orange County – 1 January 2017

Gloomy low cloud did not significantly hinder the count, which finished with a provisional 124 species. Access to private property in the southeast part of the circle has helped "stabilize" the count, as the number of species else here, especially waterfowl, seems very variable. The only "rare" species was Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, a species that is known to be present in the area year round, but in very limited numbers, and quite difficult to find outside of breeding season.

# Bird Sightings – December 2016

For this column, we review, looking for rare and very rare species, all credible eBird and other 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:** Highlight of the local scene was the finding of six (and possibly as many as eight) Brown Boobies working the canal alongside the North Levee Road on Pleasure Island,

Port Arthur on December 21. Although there have been Brown Boobies in Baytown and Port O'Connor, and a colony of about 40 on the Lake Ponchartrain Causeway in Louisiana, the birds on Pleasure Island have been by far the most accessible. They have been regularly feeding along the canal often within 100 feet of the levee road, and were still being seen regularly in the mornings on January 2.

Among the birds found on local Christmas Bird Counts and elsewhere locally were numerous American Woodcocks. Also of note were an apparently returning Couch's Kingbird and also a Red-breasted Nuthatch. Two Groove-billed Anis give rise to the possibility that this species is becoming more common locally. The Bolivar Peninsula CBC on December 22 produced a good number of rarities, including two Lesser Nighthawks, two Long-tailed Ducks, a MacGillivray's Warbler, all in the High Island area.

## Seen in our Core Counties (listed above)

Cinnamon Teal	Dec 15-27	JEF-TP (up to 2) Harlan Stewart, Jeff Graham, Art MacInnon.
Least Grebe	Dec 15-18+	JEF-TP (up to 5) multiple obs
Brown Booby	Dec 21-31+	JEF-Pleasure Is (4 or more) Gerald Duhon et al.
Northern Gannet	Dec 29	JEF-SRSP (12) SM
Green Heron	Dec 29	JEF-McFaddin NWR (3) JAW
Bald Eagle	Dec 10	JEF-WJC (1) Mike Austin
	Dec 14	JEF-TXPT (1) Sara Caulk
	Dec 14	JEF-McFaddin NWR (1) Sara Caulk
	Dec 19	JEF-WJC (1) SM
	Dec 29	JEF-McFaddin NWR (1) JAW
Red Knot	Dec 14	JEF-SRSP (1) Sara Caulk
American Woodcock	Dec 9	JEF-SW (1) JHH
	Dec 10	JEF-SW (3) JHH
	Dec 15	JEF-SW (3) Gary Binderim
	Dec 17	TYL-Lake Hyatt Rd (2); Christine Sliva, JAW
	Dec 18	JEF-SW (2) Gary Binderim
	Dec 20	TYL-Campers Cove Park (1) SM
	Dec 29	JEF-Backridge Rd (2) JHH
Groove-billed Ani	Dec 29	JEF-Backridge Rd (2) JHH
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	Dec 1-9	HAI-Rose Hill Acres (1) JM
	Dec 7	JEF-NEDR (1) HS
	Dec 15-31	JEF-NEDR (1 or 2) JJW
Black-chinned Humm	Dec 4-27+	JEF-NEDR (1) JJW
	Dec 18-25+	JEF-NEDR (1, second bird) JJW
Rufous Hummingbird	Dec 5-7+	JEF-NEDR (1) HS
Rufous/Allen's Humm.	Dec 1-9	HAI-Rose Hill Acres (1)
	JMDec 4-21+	JEF-NEDR (1) SM
	Dec 5-7	JEF-NEDR (1) HS
Buff-bellied Humm.	Dec 13-30+	JEF-NEDR (1) JJW
Horned Lark	Dec 29	JEF-Beach E of SRSP (2) JAW
Couch's Kingbird	Dec 29	JEF-Backridge Rd (1) JHH, CS, Mary Carter, Sherrie Gibson
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	Dec 29	JEF-SW (1) MC et al.
Cave Swallow	Dec 10	JEF-WJC (12) Mike Austin
Red-breasted Nuthatch	Dec 29	JEF-SW (1) MC, SH, TH,
Louisiana Waterthrush	Dec 20	TYL-Magnolia Ridge Campground (1) Wanda Smith
Prairie Warbler	Dec 30	JEF-TP (1) SH
Fox Sparrow	Dec 17	HAI-BTNP-Turkey Crk Trl (1) SM
	Dec 20	JAS-CR150 (1) Sherrie Gibson, Christine Sliva, JAW
Indigo Bunting	Dec 29	JEF-Backridge Rd (1) JHH
Purple Finch	Dec 17	HAI-STNP-Kirby NT (2) Randy Lewis

Pine Siskin Dec 20 TYL-Campers Cove Park (2) SM, John Berner

## Nearby Counties (very rare species only)

Cinnamon Teal	Dec 11-31+	CHA-ANWR (up to 4) multiple obs
Long-tailed Duck	Dec 22	GAL-High Island Oilfield (2) multiple obs
Common Goldeneye	Dec 19-30	CHA-ANWR (4) multiple obs
Glossy Ibis	Dec 2-24+	CHA-ANWR (1) multiple obs
Purple Gallinule	Dec 22	CHA-ANWR (1) Janet Neath, Michelle Romyed
Franklin's Gull	Dec 26	CHA-ANWR (4) Andy Davis (No details)
Lsr. Black-backed Gull	Dec 27	CHA-Trinity Bay (8) Susan Heath, David Sarkozi, David Hanson
Burrowing Owl	Dec 9-26+	CHA-ANWR (1) multiple obs
Lesser Nighthawk	Dec 22	GAL-Smith Oaks (2) SM et al
Buff-bellied Humm.	Dec 22	GAL-Smith Oaks (1) SM
	Dec 26	GAL-Smith Oaks (1) Denny Cooke, Andy Davis
Least Flycatcher	Dec 22	CHA-ANWR (1) JM et al
	Dec 26	CHA-ANWR (2) Dennis Cooke
	Dec 28	CHA-ANWR (1) Jelmer Poelstra
Say's Phoebe	Dec 10	CHA-FM1985 (1) Mike Austin
Great Kiskadee	Dec 9-28	CAL-Sam Houston Jones SP (1) multiple obs.
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	Dec 22-28	CHA-ANWR Ent. Rd (1) John Mariani, David Sarkozi, JAW
	Dec 22	GAL-Boy Scout Woods (1) SM
Bell's Vireo	Dec 14	CAM-Johnson Bayou (1) Jeff Harding, SM
Nashville Warbler	Dec 18	CAM-W.Hackberry (1) Erik Johnson
MacGillivray's Warbler	Dec 22	GAL-Smith Oaks (1) Barbara Rapstein et al
Lark Sparrow	Dec 17	CHA-ANWR (1) Brenda Gonzales

**Abbreviations used:** ANWR – Anahuac NWR; BF – Bolivar Flats; BTNP – Big Thicket National Preserve; CAL – Calcasieu Parish; CAM – Cameron Parish; CHA – Chambers County; GAL – Galveston County; HAI – Hardin County; HS – Harlan Stewart; JAW – John Whittle; JEF – Jefferson County; JHH – John Haynes; JJW – Jana and John Whittle; JM – John Mariani; LIB – Liberty County; MC – Michael Cooper; NEDR – Nederland; ORA – Orange County; RL – Randy Lewis; SAB – Sabine County; SH – Sheila Hebert; SM – Steve Mayes, SRSP – Sea Rim State Park; SW – Sabine Woods; TH – Thomas Hellweg; TP – Tyrrell Park including Cattail Marsh; TXPT – Texas Point NWR; TYL – Tyler County; WJC – West Jefferson County

## Fall 2016 Migration

This is the third fall migration season for which we have attempted to provide comprehensive data on the fall migrants passing through Sabine Woods, and also some of the arriving winter residents. The tables include sightings at Sabine Woods only. There were only a few sightings along Highway 87 and at Sea Rim State Park during the fall, and a handful along the road to the site of the former pilot station at Texas Point. The most interesting of those have been reported in the Bird Sightings columns in the last few issues.

For the most part, the numbers on the table speak for themselves. In many ways, the fall migration got off to a slow start as warmer than normal weather locally and further north apparently allowed many migrants to migrate in the later part of their normal migration window. However, the effect was not uniform across all species groups. Flycatcher migration, always prominent in fall migration at Sabine Woods seemed to this observer very much normal in numbers and timing. On the other hand, both vireos and thrushes, and especially the latter, were scarce this fall. That having been said, there was a five-day period in late August when there were large numbers of Red-eyed Vireos. Swainson's Warblers were detected on a number of occasions, and one very rare fall Blackpoll Warbler was seen well. Relatively few tanagers were seen and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks almost absent.

Space and print size considerations have necessitated leaving a few species off the table that were seen only a few times during the fall. These were:

Willow Flycatcher Aug 19 (1), Sep 5 (1), Sep 6 (1), Sep 9 (1), Sep 11 (1), Sep 20 (1)

Alder Flycatcher Sep 20 (1)

For these two species, those listed above are those where the observer specifically indicated that the bird vocalized; otherwise, they were treated as Willow/Alder (Traill's) Flycatchers. In the table, we have included all these reports in the Traill's line.

Vermilion Flycatcher Sep 25 (1)

Bell's Vireo Sep 13, 18, 19, Oct 3 (1) likely same bird.

Philadelphia Vireo Sep 22 (1)

Bed-breasted Nuthatch Oct 9 on (1)

Golden-crowned Kinglet Oct 6 (2) Oct 7 (3)

Veery Sep 16 (1)

Hermit Thrush Oct 21 (15), Oct 22 (2), Nov 7 (2)

Wood Thrush Sep 24 (1), Sep 29 (1), Oct 8 (2), Oct 15 (1)

Louisiana/Northern Waterthrush Aug 26 (1), Sep 5 (1)

Golden-winged Warbler Oct 5 (1), Oct 7 (1)

Swainson's Warbler Aug 29 (1), Aug 30 (1), Sep 13 (1), and one Sep 29 report without any details.

Bay-breasted Warbler Oct 10 (1)

Blackpoll Warbler Oct 15 (1)

Black-throated Blue Warbler Sep 25, 27, 28, 30 (1), believed to be the same female.

Prairie Warbler Sep 20 (1), Sep 27 (1), Sep 24, 25, 26 (1), Oct 8 (1)

Townsend's Warbler Sep 13 (1) Oct 15 (1)

Scarlet Tanager Sep 15 (1), Sep 16 (1), Sep 21 (1), Oct 6 (2), Oct 9 (1)

Rose-breasted Grosbeak Oct 8 (1), Oct 15 (2)

There were no reports at Sabine Woods this fall of Gray-cheeked Thrush or Cerulean Warblers. Other noteworthy birds included a Groove-billed Ani seen Sep 9, 13, 26, 30 and Oct 4, and mention must be made of the Phainopepla at the Texas Point NWR Parking Lot Oct 22 to 25.

In the summary table that follows, we present a listing of the principal migrant species seen in Sabine Woods this fall. The number shown for each species is based on the *highest number* that was reported for each day in any credible report. The goal is to ensure that a bird is counted only once on each day it was present. It is, of course, normally impossible to know if an individual bird is being counted on successive days. This is different from other typical analyses, which often merely sum the numbers reported on all reports. We believe the methodology employed here presents a more accurate picture, as we have a greater number of reports for the days in the peak of migration.

We have reviewed all reports with a critical eye before including them in the analysis. Reports from a single observer or group of observers that included species that were significantly early or significantly late but included no details (or photographs) that indicated that the observer or group knew that the species were unusual or rare on the date were not included unless the species was reported on other independent reports for that date. Reports showing numbers of each individual species greatly in excess of those reported by other observers on the same day were not used. Similarly, reports with multiple questionable identifications in the same report were not used. We know that this undoubtedly results in the exclusion of a few sightings that are accurate as to numbers and correct as to the identification, and we apologize to those observers, but would encourage them to add brief comments in their eBird postings, especially if they know there were few other observers present on that day, and especially if they do not regularly bird in southeast Texas.

This compilation would not have been possible without the efforts of many birders. First and foremost, we thank John Haynes who birded the Woods almost every day during the peak of migration. We used reports regularly posted by Michael Cooper, Sheila Hebert, Thomas Hellweg, Steve Mayes, and John Whittle. We also used eBird reports posted by Mike Austin, Laura Baker, MaryAnne Beauchemin, Gary Binderim, J&L Bryan, Kris Cannon, Teresa Connell, Jeff Corcoran, Howard Davis, Pat Dwyer, Shelli Ellerbe, Joe Fischer, Cathy Hay, Lisa Holmes, Jack Kelly, Brad Lirette, John Mariani, Gene Prejean, Nancy Price, Nina Rach, Michelle Rometry, Ryan Shaw, Cathy Sheeter, Dennis Shepler, Alan Schmierer, Sandi Templeton, Ron Weeks, Jane Wiewora, and "BrenWLR".

If the small print causes you difficulties, please remember that each issue of the *Brown Pelican* is posted on the web at [www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org) as a pdf image that can be easily enlarged.

John A. Whittle





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Many interesting Texas bird sightings are posted on **TEXBIRDS**. The archives of this listserv are at [www.freelists.org/archive/texbirds](http://www.freelists.org/archive/texbirds). It is not necessary to subscribe to the listserv to view the archives, which include all recent postings. National rare bird sightings are posted on **Facebook ABA Rare Bird Alert**.

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 at [texasbirds.org/BirdingLocations.php](http://texasbirds.org/BirdingLocations.php)