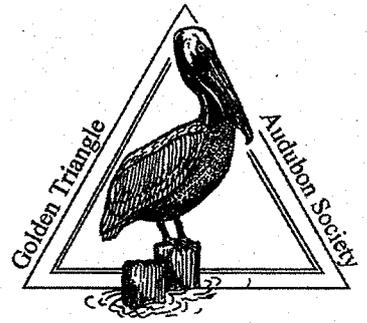


# The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 23 No. 4

April 2017

**Membership Meeting  
Thursday April 20, 2017 7:00 p.m.  
Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont**

**A Big Year in Alaska  
Lynn Barber**

Lynn will talk about her birding travels all around Alaska during her big year in 2016 and will show slides of a sampling of the over 300 species of birds seen in the Anchorage area, the Homer and Kenai areas, the southeast panhandle, the southern and western islands of Kodiak, Dutch Harbor, Adak, St. Paul and St. Lawrence, central Alaska, and Barrow in the north.

Lynn was born in Wisconsin, and has lived in Alaska, Oregon, North Carolina, Texas, South Dakota and now Alaska. Her books, *Extreme Birding: One Woman's Big Year* (2011) and *Birds in Trouble* (2016) were published by Texas A&M University Press. In addition to doing a birding big year in the continental United States and Canada in 2008, she has done state big years in Texas (2005), South Dakota (2012), and Alaska (2016). Other avocations include painting birds, bird-photography, giving bird-related talks, church volunteer activities, playing the hammered dulcimer, and baking cookies. She is married to David Barber, a meteorologist with the US Weather Service in Anchorage.

Lynn will only have one or two copies of her books with her, and will take orders for autographed copies to be mailed (no extra charge) when she returns to Alaska.

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

## *The Brown Pelican*

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Issue number 238

### 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 April 20, 2017. Membership Meeting.** Lynn Barber. A Big Year in Alaska. This will be an exciting talk. Details on p.1.

#### **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.

#### **From IH10**

Exit at Walden Road on the west side of Beaumont.

Go south of Walden Road for about 1/2 mile 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.

## Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank all those who brought refreshments over the last few meetings. **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](mailto:janafw@aol.com)) **as far in advance as possible.** Please help if you can.

**Saturday April 22, 2017. Field Trip to Sabine Woods.** This trip will look for Neotropical migrants at the height of spring migration. We will assemble at Sabine Woods at 7:30 a.m. (You should be able to find the group if you are unable to be there quite that early.)

At Sabine Woods, there is a small parking area, with additional parking improvised using the roadside verges. Portable toilets are available at the entrance during spring migration.

This trip will seek Neotropical migrants at the height of spring migration, and involves relatively easy walking on the trails at Sabine Woods to look for migrant songbirds, although another option is to sit at the drip and wait for the birds to come to you. However, Hurricane Ike completely destroyed the boardwalks, and the trails may be muddy and slippery if it has rained in the prior day or two. Armadillos and two young pigs have been very active, so there will be holes to avoid! There is a \$5 sanctuary pass donation at Sabine Woods for those who are **not** members of Golden Triangle Audubon or Texas Ornithological Society. This field trip is especially suited for not-very-experienced birders. Often, we break into smaller groups, with an experienced birder in each group.

Bring insect repellent. Most participants will bring lunch. Facilities in Sabine Pass are limited, although gasoline and very limited food are available.

Birding in late April can be exciting. However, we cannot promise anything, as the number of birds in the coastal woodlots is highly dependent on the weather conditions over the Gulf. Immediately after a cold front passes



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.com](http://www.earthshare-texas.com).

and the following day are usually considered to be among the most likely days to have a good concentration of migrants at favored coastal locations.

Sabine Woods is on the north side of Highway 87, 4.1 miles west of the stop sign in Sabine Pass. Take Highway 87 from Port Arthur to Sabine Pass, turn right at the stop sign, and go 4.1 miles.

**Saturday May 13, 2017. 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. This

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](mailto:johnawhittle@aol.com) or 409-722-4193) for details or offers to help.

**Thursday May 18, 2017. Membership Meeting.** Members' favorite bird photos. Following on the success of our program last November, we plan another favorite bird photos program.

**Saturday June 3, 2017. Field Trip to Hardin County.** Our usual trip to the area north of Silsbee to look for breeding warblers and other passerines. Full details next month.

## March Meeting Report

Tonight we had at least 40 people at our GTAS meeting and Art MacKinnon talked about how people who travel for work can bird after they finish their work in various locations. Art has birded since he was 12 years old and has been a member of Golden Triangle Audubon for many years even though he no longer lives here. He showed beautiful scenery of places where he traveled and then he listed all the species that he has seen there. He works and birds on a regular basis in Durango, Colorado Cherry Creek State Park in

Denver, Colorado, Florida, Seattle, Washington, San Francisco, California, and Franklin Mountain State Park in El Paso.

Some of the birds he showed pictures of were: an American Dipper, Bald Eagle, Great Horned Owl, American Tree Sparrow, Magpie, Lazuli Bunting, Tricolored Blackbird, Pacific Wren, Burrowing Owl and one of the Rosy Finches. Thank you Art, for the very enlightening idea of working and birding too.

A member of GTAS who lives in Oklahoma has sent money almost every year for over ten years for our members to have a special chocolate cake that is made in a Nederland bakery. Tonight we had that with our potluck meal and it was delicious. Thank you Lou Skillern for always remembering us even though you moved away a long time ago.

Next month we will have Lynn Barber who will speak about her big year birding in Alaska where she lives. Lynn has done several big years. She will have one of her books for sale but she is only bringing two copies this time. But she will send you an autographed copy if you pay her. Hope to see you on April 20th.

On Saturday, we will have a monthly field trip to Boykin Springs. We will meet in the Wal-Mart parking lot in Jasper at 7:30. All field trips are free and as always the public is invited.

*Jana Whittle*

## Sabine Woods Work Day 11 March 2017

Despite some not altogether friendly weather, an excellent work day was held on Saturday at Sabine Woods, with 10 volunteers contributing to the effort on the day, and three more the preceding day. We thank each and every one of the following for their splendid accomplishments:

Michael Cooper, Howard Davis, Ashley Fuselier, Craig Geoffroy, John Haynes, Sheila Hebert, Thomas Hellweg, Gary Kelley, Steve Mayes,

Sherrie Roden, Phil Rogers, Harlan Stewart.

Over the two days, we got a lot accomplished. All the trails and meadows were mowed. The sides of the trails were trimmed. We filled in a large number of armadillo excavations. Some overhead branches were trimmed; some vines threatening to strangle oaks were cut. Numerous other small tasks were completed. We still have to deal with many fire ant mounds and some hog damage. The fire ants mounds we will treat when it is dry enough again, but hog damage is an ongoing issue. It seems that two piglets, growing, but still able to easily pass through our fences, are responsible for most of the rooting that is the principal damage that we are currently experiencing. We hope that as they grow and are no longer able to as easily pass through the fences (although we realistically cannot hope to make our fences pig proof), and as, during the spring migration season, the presence of numbers of birders acts to persuade them to leave the Sanctuary, the problem will diminish.

The Woods are in excellent shape as the spring migration season approaches. All birders who visit the Woods will surely enjoy the Sanctuary, and on their and TOS's behalf, we thank you for all your efforts on Saturday.

*John A. Whittle*

## Membership Dues

To simplify our record keeping, all memberships now run from January through December. Membership dues remain at \$15 per year. We are now accepting 2017 dues. You may pay at any membership meeting (checks preferred) or use the subscription/membership blank on the back page.

Dues for all members will be for the period ending on December 31. The memberships of new members joining in August or later in the year will extend to the end of the following calendar year. For new members joining National Audubon on line and selecting our Chapter code (W25), we receive a rebate of the entire first year's national dues, and no Chapter dues are expected for that first year.

# Florida's Wading Birds Had a Terrible Breeding Season Last Year

*By Meghan Bartels*

from the Audubon website March 14, 2017

Last Year an annual survey of south Florida's wading birds—including Roseate Spoonbills, Great Egrets, and Wood Storks—found the fewest nests in eight years. The results continue a worrisome trend of nesting decline.

Every few weeks each winter and spring, Roseate Spoonbills nesting in a southern Florida lagoon receive an odd set of visitors: Audubon scientists, who paddle and trek through the brackish water among small mangrove islands to spy on the birds, their nests, and, later, their chicks.

Nests counts are among the most reliable ways to monitor bird species: No nests means no fledglings, which means fewer adult birds in the future. So in southern Florida, which was once home to 2.5 million wading birds, scientists have spent 22 years counting nests of 18 species in the Everglades and surrounding areas. Five of those are considered indicator species—Wood Storks, Great Egrets, White Ibises, Snowy Egrets, and Tricolored Herons—and their nests' successes and failures have come to represent the health of the entire ecosystem.

The results of these counts are published each year in an annual report, spearheaded by the South Florida Water Management District, that also takes into account nesting data collected by state agencies, protected areas, and universities. In addition to the Audubon team's regular visits to spoonbill nests, most other surveyors tally nests by photographing them from helicopters and boats.

The latest South Florida Wading Bird Report, which was published last week, offers signs of trouble for the birds and the places they live. During this nesting season, which ran from December 2015 to July 2016, surveyors were disappointed to find 26,676 nests total. That's just one-third the number of nests tallied during 2009, one of the best nesting years in decades, and the lowest nest census since the 2007-2008 season. Of the indicator species, only two (Great Egrets and White Ibises) met their nest recovery goals. The only bird to show an above-average nesting season last year was the Roseate Spoonbill.

The disappointing results aren't a total surprise. In south Florida, wetland ecosystems are driven by water levels, which vary widely depending on an interplay of rainfall, sea level, and water moving through the landscape. Over the course of last year, different parts of the region saw both unusually high and unusually low water levels in patterns that don't make life easy for birds. More worrisome, however, is that the poor results and their contributing factors are part of a longer-term negative nesting trend—one that speaks to the complexity of these habitats and the severity of the changes they are experiencing, whether from warmer climates, human activity, or some other cause.

"You can blame [the 2016 results] on the weather," says Julie Hill-Gabriel, who leads Audubon Florida's Everglades team. According to Hill-Gabriel, in a healthy ecosystem, the occasional bust year would be balanced by the occasional boom year, but those simply aren't happening these days. "We

haven't seen that above-average [nesting] to balance out when you have a bad year," she says.

In Florida Bay, where Audubon scientists lead surveys of wading bird nests, more than 600 Roseate Spoonbills successfully fledged in 2016. The spoonbill was the only bird to have an above-average nesting season last year.

Wood Storks are typical in their response to rainfall patterns. They're happiest with wet summers, when fish flourish, and dry winters, which cram fish into smaller pools and make for easy fishing, a necessity for feeding their chicks. Last year's weather—a dry summer and a wet El Niño winter—meant hungry storks missed their nesting targets. All together, Wood Storks produced 1,457 nests, a decrease of 38 percent from the 10-year average.

There's a chance that number could improve for next year's report. Thanks to just the right amount of rain this year, the current breeding season shows an increase in nesting activity from Wood Storks, particularly at Corkscrew Swamp, where the birds have bred only twice in the past decade. Audubon monitors at Corkscrew are optimistic, but they remain concerned that nesting is shifting to later in the year.

According to the report, Snowy Egrets, Little Blue Herons, and Tricolored Herons all continued their "sharp declines in nest numbers over the past decade." Snowy Egrets and Little Blue Herons produced about half as many nests as their 10-year average, and Tricolored Heron nests were down 16 percent. Also noted in the report is that the declines for all three birds have "been particularly acute in the Everglades and are cause for concern," but it's still unclear why exactly the drop-offs have been so severe.

One silver lining in the report is that Great Egret nesting numbers didn't decrease as sharply as with other species, showing only a 7 percent decline from their 10-year average. This was in part because the birds were able to continue nesting at Lake Okeechobee, Florida's largest freshwater lake. Many wading birds had trouble navigating the lake this year because of unusually high water levels due to excessive rainfall; Great Egrets did better thanks to their long, stilt-like legs.

But this year may be just the beginning of the high-water problems at Okeechobee. Before humans settled the region, lake water would have flowed south through the Everglades wetlands and into Florida Bay, but without that natural flow, water managers are sometimes forced to send water east and west, where it doesn't belong. One of the most controversial bills on the state legislature's calendar this spring seeks to reinforce the edges of the lake so managers can store more water. That would reduce the amount of water redistributed east and west of the lake, and it would also keep Okeechobee's marshlands flooded through the breeding season.

The loss of that southward freshwater flow also has consequences for Florida Bay and its 850 square miles of

*continued on page 5*

# Researchers Identify the Hormone That Tells Migratory Birds to Stop Eating and Keep Moving

*According to a new study, the same hormone that signals to humans we've eaten our fill triggers migrating birds to continue their trek.*

*By Jason G. Goldman*

from the Audubon Website February 17, 2017

Just off the western coast of Italy sits a five-mile-long island called Ponza, which is all that remains of the caldera rim of an extinct volcano. Today, it's an important re-fueling station for migratory songbirds, as it's often the first stop they can make as they return to Europe after wintering in Africa. Arriving at Ponza after a non-stop flight over the Mediterranean, the birds show up ready to eat. But after gorging themselves and before taking off again, the birds engage in a frantic, curious behavior common to many migratory species and known to ornithologists by the German word *zugunruhe*.

"They behave in a funny way," says Leonida Fusani, a biologist at the University of Vienna. "They flutter their wings and make little jumps. You can tell this behavior from any other type of nocturnal activity."

Fusani studies the biological and environmental factors that drive billions of birds to migrate from their breeding grounds to their overwintering ranges in the tropics and back once again. Like other researchers, he's long known that birds must fuel up before their long flights by packing on the pounds. But no one was sure how they knew when they had eaten enough to safely take off again. Research performed on poultry about a decade ago provided a clue: The hormone ghrelin, which signals to humans and other mammals that it's time to stop eating, plays a similar role in chickens and quail.

Fusani knew that migrating birds exhibit signs of *zugunruhe* after they've stored up enough fat from their diet—or, in other words, when they're full. So he suspected that ghrelin might also be involved in their migration, perhaps signaling when it's time to keep moving. To test his idea, he captured Garden Warblers, small brown songbirds that actually prefer woodlands to gardens, when they arrived to rest near the ornithology research station on Ponza. A quick blood test showed that the birds with more body fat had higher levels of ghrelin in their bloodstreams compared to their leaner counterparts. That supported a clear link between hormone levels and the birds' physical condition.

But Fusani still needed to see if ghrelin itself was implicated in *zugunruhe*; after all, there are many hormones involved in regulating foraging and migratory behaviors. So in a second study, he and his colleagues captured birds on the island and kept them in fabric-lined cages for one night to monitor their behavior. Some of the warblers were injected with ghrelin, while others were injected with a saline solution as a control.

Those birds whose ghrelin levels had been artificially boosted ate less, and also displayed the migratory restlessness that defines *zugunruhe* — clear-cut evidence that the hormone is tied to both appetite and migration. The

study was published last week in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

"We think of migration as this spectacular, long flight through air, but most of the biology of migration is at these stopover sites," says biologist Emily Cohen of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, who was not involved in the study. "This is really strong evidence" that ghrelin is the physiological link between appetite and migration, she says.

The potential implications of this research extend beyond just better understanding how birds migrate. Migratory songbirds rapidly gain and then lose some 50 percent of their body mass in fat as they prepare for and recover from migrations. Thanks to the similarities in the physiology that underlies appetite regulation in mammals and birds, Fusani thinks that these birds might ultimately prove useful as model organisms for the study of obesity and other metabolic disorders in humans. Which might make you look at the birds stuffing their bills at your backyard feeder in a whole new light.

## Florida Wading Birds *cont from page 4*

shallow water that hosts mangrove islands, coral reefs, sea grass meadows—and the lagoon of Roseate Spoonbills. Last year, the bay water grew so salty that seagrass, a cornerstone of the bay's ecosystem, died off in swaths. That saltiness could be having an impact on the Roseate Spoonbills. In recent years, they have moved inland away from the lagoon, and while this year's nest count was above average, their nesting in Florida Bay seems to have plateaued overall.

Despite the report being mostly bad news, Hill-Gabriel hopes it will add momentum to the push for projects to restore the Everglades and the region's natural southward water flow. "We know the birds are telling us that the system is broken," she says. But between projects that have been recently completed and those that are in the works, "there's a lot of good news on the restoration front." That includes one project 30 years in the making, which would elevate a major east-west road so water can flow under it. Another restoration project, which would give a failed subdivision development back to nature, should be complete within about two years.

Other projects in the works or on the table could add to that list. And to find out if they are helping, Audubon scientists will continue their annual spoonbill nest counts in the lagoon. The birds, sensitive indicators as they are, will tell them if they're moving fast enough to restore and save the critical habitat.

## Field Trip to Boykin Springs – 18 March 2017

Not every field trip is about seeing as many species as possible. Some field trips are targeted toward just a few very special birds and these may necessitate forgoing the big species number in order to find those targets. This may mean visits to very specific habitats and this was the choice of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society for its March field trip. The destination: the open mature pine forests around Boykin Springs in east Texas. The targets: Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Bachman's Sparrow.

The Red-cockaded Woodpecker is an endangered species endemic to the southeastern United States – it is found nowhere else on earth. It requires mature pine forest with an open understory including some still living pine trees afflicted with the heartwood fungus that allow the birds to more easily burrow into them to build their nests. Formerly, this type of habitat was maintained by periodic fires that swept the understory clean but did not burn hot enough to kill the mature Long-leaf Pine trees. The fires had the added benefit of opening up the pine cones and allowing new trees to grow. But the coming of European settlers changed this habitat. Fires were suppressed which allowed woody underbrush to grow thick – a habitat that the woodpeckers cannot handle. And when fires did start, they burned out of control with all of the extra fuel and the added heat killed even the mature trees. Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, which nest in loose colonies, began to dwindle in numbers and their habitat became more and more limited and more fragmented. The Endangered Species Act helped save this iconic American species as habitat is now maintained by the U.S. Forest Service and other agencies with controlled burns and other management techniques that have helped stabilize the woodpecker numbers and expand their habitat.

Some of that habitat exists in the Angelina National Forest around Boykin Springs Park and was the first stop for the Golden Triangle Audubon Society. The woodpecker trees are marked by the forest service to better keep track of the nesting locations and so were easy to find. But the woodpeckers themselves are not always so easy to find and are more often seen while out foraging in the pine trees than near the nest trees. Luckily, the birders did not have to wait long on this trip. The sharp eyes of Sherrie Roden found a Red-cockaded Woodpecker foraging high above in a nearby tree. And as soon as the group got on that bird, a second woodpecker was found scaling the tree just above the first! The group was able to get good looks at these birds as they chipped bark off the pine trees in search of insect prey. Now the group just needed to find the Bachman's Sparrow! Easy, right? Well ...

Bachman's Sparrow lives in the same open pine savannahs as the woodpecker and too has suffered from the loss of its preferred habitat. Though not on the endangered list, numbers of Bachman's Sparrows have also decreased significantly. Having said that, the sparrows are forming territories in March and are usually not that hard to find in the proper habitat as the

males sing from exposed perches. And the sparrows were singing throughout the woods, all around the group but none could be seen! As soon as the birders started getting close to a singing sparrow, the birds would quiet down and disappear! It was quite frustrating to get so close and still not see the bird! After quite a lot of looking, the birders decided to break for lunch and try birding in different habitat within Boykin Springs Park itself.

The park was beautiful as the group hiked along the Sawmill Trail admiring the wild azaleas and other wildflowers. Colorful butterflies like Pipevine, Palamedes and Zebra Swallowtails visited the blooms while the birders admired them. Birds were unfortunately a bit scarce. The piney woods in March can sometimes be a bit bird poor as the winter birds exit for more northern climes and the spring migrants have not yet arrived. That seemed to be the case on this day as few additional species were added. But some birds were found including Downy Woodpecker, Chipping Sparrow, Carolina Wren, Brown-headed Nuthatch and Pine Warbler. With the scarcity of other species around, the birders decided to take one more shot at the Bachman's Sparrow!

Headed back into the sparrow habitat, the birds were still singing but it was obvious that a group the size of the Golden Triangle field trip was just not going to get close to them. It was decided to seek out the closest singing bird and just scan all nearby perches in hopes of spotting a distant sparrow. It did not seem to be going that well as the singing bird remained elusive. Luckily, another of the groups sharp eyed birders, John Haynes, finally spotted the culprit! A singing Bachman's Sparrow on an open perch for all to see! Sure, the bird was farther away than would have been desired but every birder was eventually able to get on it and got decent looks. This was a life bird for a number of the birders and there were even a few decent pictures obtained of the distant bird.

So, in the end, it all worked out well. Big numbers of species like those seen at places like Anahuac or Cattail Marsh are great but sometimes a change of pace and just finding a few, special birds can be just as satisfying. And Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Bachman's Sparrow are special birds! Hopefully, these special birds will be around for many future generations to enjoy!

The following species were recorded by the trip leaders: Turkey Vulture (2); Mourning Dove (3); Red-bellied Woodpecker (1); Downy Woodpecker (2); Red-cockaded Woodpecker (3); White-eyed Vireo (1); Blue Jay (10); American Crow (5); Carolina Chickadee (3); Tufted Titmouse (2); Brown-headed Nuthatch (3); Carolina Wren (2); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (2); Golden-crowned Kinglet (1); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (3); Pine Warbler (12); Yellow-rumped Warbler (6); Bachman's Sparrow (7); Chipping Sparrow (10); Northern Cardinal (3); American Goldfinch (1).

*Steve Mayes*

## Bird Sightings – March 2017

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 Peninsula 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)

**Commentary:** A very early press date has necessitated cutting off this month's report on March 22. Sightings in the rest of March will be included in next month's column.

As we approach spring migration, there always are a few "early" migrants that qualify as rare or very rare. While these perhaps do not have quite the same interest to local birders as do out-of-range vagrants, they are important in monitoring whether birds are migrating earlier than they used to. Conventional wisdom is that the "photo period" – the length of daylight – is what triggers most species to commence spring

migration, but it is appropriate to question how much weather, and, in particular, temperature may play a role. The further south one goes (until one reaches the equator) the less variation there is in the length of daylight with time of year. So a tropical migrant wintering in Ecuador or close by would not experience any change in the photo period, and the start of migration is probably primarily triggered by some other factor. On the other hand, many shorebirds wintering well north of the equator and breeding in the high Arctic experience a dramatic change in the photo period, especially in the fall, and it makes sense that this would be the trigger for such species. But even then, weather fronts do have an impact on fall migration of both migrants and winter residents in our area.

Looking at the reports below, it would seem that Swallow-tailed Kites are appearing earlier. However, it may be that the population is increasing so more are being detected on the edges of the normal migration dates. It may well be that the "normal" spring migration dates for Yellow-throated Vireos need to be adjusted. In the case of Crested Caracara, the range appears to be spreading further, and the same may well be true for Great Kiskadee.

### Seen in our Core Counties (listed above)

Least Grebe	Mar 1-13	JEF-TP (up to 6) JHH
Swallow-tailed Kites	Mar 5	JEF-BMT Washington/Major Dr (eleven) Reine Muehlenbein
	Mar 7	JEF-GROVES (1) Sherrie Roden
	Mar 7	JEF-SW (1) JHH
	Mar 13	JEF-TP (4) SH
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	Mar 2	HAI-Rose Hill Acres (2) JM (wintering)
Black-chinned Humm.	Mar 2,16	HAI-Rose Hill Acres (1) JM (wintering)
Rufous Hummingbird	Mar 2	HAI-Rose Hill Acres (3) JM (wintering)
	Mar 7	JEF-NEDR (1) JAW
Chimney Swift	Mar 8	JEF-SW (1) JHH (early)
Crested Caracara	Mar 13	HAI-Old Sour Lake Rd (2) Amy and Jay Packer (species seems to be spreading north)
Gt. Crested Flycatcher	Mar 2	JEF-SW (2) JHH (very early)
	Mar 3	JEF-SW (1) MC (very early)
Great Kiskadee	Mar 13	HAI-FM1003 near FM943 (1) Amy and Jay Packer
Yellow-throated Vireo	Mar 7	JEF-SW (1) JHH
	Mar 13	JEF-SW (3) JHH, Mike Austin
	Mar 13	HAI-Kirby Trail (1) Amy & Jay Packer
	Mar 14	JEF-SW (4), MC, JHH
Wood Thrush	Mar 5	JEF-SW (1) TH (very early)
Ovenbird	Mar 19	JEF-SW (1) Kenneth Rieger (early)
Worm-eating Warbler	Mar 19	JEF-SW (1) SM, MC, TH (early)
Prothonotary Warbler	Mar 17	ORA-Claiborne West Pk (1) Amy and Jay Packer (slightly early)
	Mar 17	ORA-Shangri La (1) Ashley Jordan
Hooded Warbler	Mar 8	JEF-SW (4) MC, JHH, Ron Berwick
	Mar 8	JEF-Texas Pt NWR (1) MC (early)
Black-thr. Green Warbler	Mar 16	JEF-SW (2) JHH (early)
Western Tanager	Mar 16	HAI-Rose Hill Acres (1) JM
Baltimore Oriole	Mar 4	JEF-SW (1) JHH, SM (probably a wintering bird)
Purple Finch	Mar 4,7	SAB-Sabinetown (up to 2) David Bell

### Nearby Counties (very rare species only)

Black Scoter	Mar 11	CAM-Holly Beach (7) David Booth, Chet St. Roman, Judson Lassiter
Glossy Ibis	Mar 10	CHA-ANWR Shoveler Pond (1) Edmond Spaeth
	Mar 20	CHA-ANWR Shoveler Pond (1) JAW, Paul Schmidt
Swallow-tailed Kite	Mar 5	CHA-ANWR-VIS (1) Janey Woodley
	Mar 12	CAM-Hackberry (1) Paul Conover
Swainson's Hawk	Mar 6	CHA-FM1985 (1) Dave Bengston
Gt. Black-backed Gull	Mar 6	GAL-Bolivar Flats/Rettillon Road (1) Dave Bengston
Black Tern	Mar 3	GAL-Bolivar Tuna Rd (1) D. Sarkozi
Burrowing Owl	Mar 1-2	CHA-ANWR (1) Tommy Grav, Dewayne Litteer
Calliope Hummingbird	Mar 21-22	CHA-Baytown Magnolia Bend (1) David Hanson
Great Kiskadee	Feb 17-Mar4+	CHA-Baytown/Northpoint Augusta St (2) Carl Poldrack
	Feb 28	CHA-Baytown Tri City Beach Rd (1) Cathy Hay
	Mar 4-19	CHA-Baytown/Northpoint Augusta St (up to 4) Carl Poldrack
Yellow-breasted Chat	Mar 20	LIB-Micallef Woods (off FM1008 6 mi N of Kenefick (1) Paul and Colette Micallef
Painted Bunting	Mar 12	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Duane Huval (wintering bird?)

**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; PI – Pleasure Is, Port Arthur; 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.

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

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### RARE BIRD ALERTS

Unfortunately, almost all the local and regional telephone Rare Bird Alerts have been discontinued in favor of various Internet distribution.

The Texas-wide Rare Bird Alert, maintained by Houston Audubon Society, is available on their web-site at <http://www.houstonaudubon.org/> Email alerts are also available for a fee. Most rare bird sightings in Texas are posted on the TEXBIRDS listserv. Archives of the listserv are at [www.freelists.org/archive/texbirds](http://www.freelists.org/archive/texbirds). It is not necessary to subscribe to the listserv to view the archives, which include all recent postings. Postings for the last two weeks are also available at <http://birding.aba.org/maillist/TX>.

Transcriptions of many current and recent email alerts are available on the Siler's Birding on the Net at <http://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..>