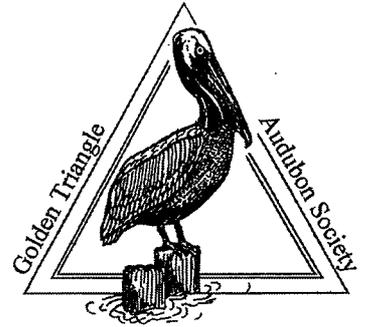


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 23 No. 5

May 2017

Membership Meeting
Thursday May 18, 2017 7:00 p.m.
Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont

Your Favorite Bird Pictures

The favorite bird pictures programs have been so well received that 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 might well 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 13. 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, and 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. 23, No.5 May 2017
Issue number 239

Golden Triangle
Audubon Society

Web Site for more information
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

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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 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 additional 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 certainly appreciate your help! Contact John Whittle (johnawhittle@aol.com or 409-722-4193) for details or offers to help.

Thursday May 18, 2017. Membership Meeting. Members' favorite bird photos. Details on page 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 on Walden Road for 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. In May, the Port Arthur Convention and Visitors Bureau will provide sandwiches, so we only need drinks and desserts for this meeting. Please call Jana Whittle at (409) 722-4193 (or email her at janafw@aol.com) **as far in advance as possible**. Please help if you can.

Saturday June 3, 2017. Field Trip to Hardin County. This is a great opportunity to see the breeding songbirds of the southern part of the Big Thicket. 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.



Audubon

This letter was emailed to all Audubon Members by Audubon President David Yarnold on March 11. We know that many of our members are not on Audubon's email list. We present it here, slightly condensed, for those who did not receive it directly.—Editor

If your in-box looks like mine, you've received a lot of email about the administration's first draft of a budget outline. There's a lot of bold-faced or bright red type on those emails and they make it sound like the proposed budget cuts are a done deal. Audubon thinks you deserve a more thoughtful response. Those emails would also lead you to believe that an executive order to begin the long process of undoing the Clean Power Plan is the end of the line. In fact, the administration's budget proposal was designed to generate headlines about living up to campaign promises, but it also divided Americans on core values like clean air and clean water. The executive orders are just the beginning of a years-long process that will test the Audubon network's commitment to science, community and fairness.

Keep in mind a president's budget proposal is just that: an opening bid. More details will emerge in the coming weeks. Those details will be debated for months in Congress. As we've seen in recent weeks on issues ranging from privatizing public lands to health care, you have a chance as constituents to influence how that budget gets shaped. As the voice of birds, Audubon will be by your side. We've worked to protect funding for the places birds need for 111 years—with Democrat and Republican presidents and across party lines in Congress. And in the coming weeks and months, we will work harder than ever with our elected representatives on both sides of the political aisle to make sure we continue to protect the clean air, clean water, and stable climate birds and people need to thrive.

.....

Audubon's leadership chooses to engage with this administration as we have with 28 that preceded it. We simply won't stand aside while the future of the Arctic Wilderness or Endangered Species Act gets decided. But we're under no illusions about how hard the fight will be in the face of many in the administration who equate caring conservation with economic hardship. That cynical and, some would say, blasphemous world view is a complete distortion of the values that drove Republicans from Teddy Roosevelt to Richard Nixon to create national parks and bedrock environmental protections.

At every step of the budget process, Audubon—with your continued help and support—will fight to protect funding that's critical to advancing our conservation work.

How can we do it? We're a credible voice for commonsense conservation, and that transcends party or politics. *The Atlantic* magazine recently described Audubon as "one of the oldest and most centrist of conservation-minded groups" in the country. In a polarized political climate, Audubon's membership is unique, with members and donors from across the political spectrum, including Democrats, Republicans and independents. We are community builders, not community dividers because birds create common ground. When I meet with chapters, I see committed conservationists and I can't readily tell R's from I's or D's.

You, our diverse members, make us an effective organization—in the communities we call home and in Washington D.C. Your representatives need to hear why funding conservation work is so important to you and to Audubon's efforts across the country. You can be confident that in the coming weeks and months we will offer you opportunities to raise your powerful voice at the crucial points when it matters most.

Remember, now more than ever, you're what hope looks like to a bird. Get involved and take action today.
David Yarnold, CEO and President
National Audubon Society

Native Plants: How to Make Your Yard Bird-Friendly

Creating a Bird-friendly yard requires the right plants, and native plants, once established, are more likely to thrive and tolerate the variance of weather and seasons. National Audubon (NAS) offers a native plants database that is easy to use and generates a list of native plants for birds in your zipcode. The URL for the database is audubon.org/native-plants.

One of the best ways to help birds thrive is to make sure your yard is bird-friendly. By following the steps below, you can create a patch of habitat that attracts colorful birds, sweet melodies, and vibrant colors. If you don't have a yard, you can still help birds by creating a native plant container garden on your patio or balcony.

The secret to success lies in choosing locally native plants, which brim with nutritious insects, berries, nectar, and seeds to give birds vital food and refuge.

1. Choosing Native Plants

Choose native plants that are adapted to your particular growing conditions, such as the amount of sunlight or shade, the type of soil, and the amount of precipitation the site receives. Search our native plants database for listings of the best bird- and wildlife-friendly plants for your area, as well as a list of native plant nurseries and other resources near you. *(See also the next article in this issue. – Ed.)*

Focus on native plants that support the highest variety and quantity of bird food.

- Native trees such as oaks, willows, birches, and maples, and native herbaceous plants such as goldenrod, milkweed, and asters host numerous caterpillar species that are a vital source of protein for birds, especially during the breeding season.
- Red tubular flowers such as native columbine, penstemon, and honeysuckle serve up nectar for hummingbirds.
- Native sunflowers, asters, and coneflowers produce seeds for songbirds.
- Berries ripen at different times, so include seasonal variety: serviceberry and cherry for birds during the breeding season and summer; dogwood and spicebush for songbirds flying south; cedar and holly trees to sustain birds through cold winter days and nights.
- Search our native plants database for listings of the best bird- and wildlife-friendly plants for your area, as well as a list of native plant nurseries and other resources near you. (You can also check out a few suggestions for native plants native to North America—but remember to find out what's native to your particular area.)

2. Planning

Plan for a variety of shapes, sizes, and kinds of plants to give vertical structure to your garden and add cover for our feathered friends.

- Cluster the same plant species together in groups or

masses.

- Things about height: Place taller plants towards the back of your borders, with lower-growing species at the edges of paths or lawn.
- Leave some room: Pay attention to each species' stated dimensions when full grown, so plants aren't too crowded together.
- Design for color palettes and continuous blooming throughout the gardening season.
- Add habitat features like hollowed boulders that catch rainwater for birds to drink and bathe in.
-

3. Preparing your garden

Prepare your garden well to save headaches later. If your site currently has turf grass or invasive plants, you will need to remove these, and you may want to enrich your soil by adding organic compost. An easy method is to lay down newspaper at least six sheets deep, with plenty of overlap; wet it down; cover it with 4 to 6 inches of mulch; and let it sit until you are ready to plant. Use deep edging—putting some sort of barrier (steel or plastic edging) that goes into the ground to separate the native plant area from the lawn area—to keep out lawn grass.

4. Planting

Plant in spring or fall and on cooler days. Follow planting instructions carefully and get tips on mulching around plants from the plant nursery or gardening center. Water as needed while young plants are becoming established and adapting to their new habitat.

5. Caring for Your Garden

Steward your native plant garden with tender loving care.

- Remove non-native and invasive weeds.
- Don't rake: Let fallen leaves and woody debris serve as a natural mulch; this will reduce unwanted weed growth, keep your plants' roots cool and moist, and provide areas for birds to forage for ground-dwelling insects.
- Enhance your garden area with brush piles that provide shelter for birds and other wildlife.
- Leave the seeds: Don't "dead-head" all of your flowering plants after they bloom, as those seedheads can be an important source of food during the fall and winter.
- In forested areas, leave dead trees and branches. Standing trees may provide homes for woodpeckers, chickadees, and other cavity-nesting species--while fallen trunks and branches support the entire forest food web.

Check out more tips from the native plant master Doug Tallamy in *Bringing Nature Home*.

This article is adapted with minor edits from the audubon.org/news/website published April 8, 2016.

Grow These Native Plants So Your Backyard Birds Can Feast

Native plants beat even the best bird feeder. Here's what to put in your garden to transform it into a year-round wonderland.

Adapted from an article by Zach Slavin in the Audubon Website February 10, 2017.

[We have adapted this article to feature birds and plants that are somewhat suited to Southeast Texas, and added a section on hummingbirds – Editor]

Find Your Bird-Friendly Plants

Birds and native plants are made for each other, thanks to millions of years of evolution. Large, colorful fruits feed birds and, in return, birds spread the plant's seeds far and wide, supporting whole ecosystems. Native plants are also important hosts for protein-rich native insects like butterfly and moth caterpillars, which nesting birds need to feed their growing chicks. For their part, birds have shaped their entire life cycles, including their migrations and feeding habits, around plant communities and the seasonal fruits and insects they serve up.

These bird-plant relationships are often so intertwined that gardeners can attract specific avians to their yards by cultivating the right plants. To help you out, we've selected the native plants that common backyard birds depend on, so you can support them in your yard. For more information, check out Audubon's Native Plant Database (www.audubon.org/native-plant) to find the best species for birds in your area.

Hummingbirds

Birds: Ruby-throated Hummingbird (spring and fall migrations, and summer nesting), wintering western hummingbirds (Rufous and Allen's Hummingbirds, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Black-chinned Hummingbird, and occasionally other western species) and wintering Buff-bellied Hummingbirds.

Attract Them With: Abutilon (flowering maple), *Hamelia patens*, *Salvia greggi*, Shrimp Plant, Mexican Turk's Cap, Mexican Cigar Plant (Giant Cuphea), David's Verity Cuphea, Purple Porterweed, Winter Honeysuckle, Bottlebrush Bush, Loquat tree, Chaste tree, Coral honeysuckle, azaleas, Firespike, Scarlet Sage, Mexican Bush Sage, Passion Flower vine.

Cardinals, Grosbeaks, and Tanagers

Birds: Northern Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Blue Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager

Attract Them With: Sunflowers (*Helianthus* sp.), elderberries (*Sambucus* sp.), and serviceberries (*Amelanchier* sp.)

There are few pleasures greater than watching birds pluck nutrient-rich seeds from the center of enormous yellow sunflowers. Sunflowers attract a wide variety of bird species, and so are practically bird feeders that you can grow in your yard. Less widely known are elderberries and serviceberries. Highly nutritious fruits prized by cardinals, grosbeaks, and tanagers drip from the branches of these small trees (or large shrubs, depending on their size). Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, for instance, depend heavily on these native berries during fall migration; 95 percent of their diets are fruit during this time. Additionally, elderberry flowers attract insects, which in turn attract even more birds in spring. Many varieties of sunflowers, elderberries, and serviceberries are edible for humans, too—if you can beat the birds to them.

Chickadees and Titmice

Birds: Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse

Attract Them With: Birches (*Betula* sp.) and sumacs (*Rhus* sp.) You wouldn't know it from their frequency at birdfeeders, but chickadees and titmice mostly eat insects. Caterpillars are an especially important food, and, like oaks, birch trees host hundreds of different caterpillar species. (They also serve up birch seeds, which are popular with chickadees, titmice, and other songbirds.) As secondary cavity nesters, these species nest and shelter in existing holes in trees, as birches are an enticing substrate for birds that drill cavities.

If you lack the space or time to grow a birch, sumac is a great alternative: It grows quickly, and thrives in recently disturbed areas. Its red winter berries are especially beautiful when held in the beaks of chickadees, titmice, and other birds that need this source of scarce winter food to survive.

Crows and Jays

Birds: American Crow, Fish Crow, Blue Jay

Attract Them With: Oaks (*Quercus* sp.) and beeches (*Fagus* sp.)

Throughout the year, these intelligent and wary birds consume a wide variety of animals and plants. But in the fall and winter months, they often depend on mast crops of oak acorns and beechnuts. In addition to their seedier offerings, oaks play host to caterpillars of over 530 species of moths and butterflies. Caterpillars are a crucial food for nestling songbirds in the spring, and so these trees draw migrating warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks, and orioles, as well as crows and jays.

Woodpeckers

Birds: Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker

Attract Them With: Pines (*Pinus* sp.), hickories (*Carya* sp.), oaks (*Quercus* sp.), and cherries (*Prunus* sp.)

Woodpeckers may already visit your suet feeders in the winter. But during most of the year, common backyard species like Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers prefer insects and other invertebrates to seeds. Pine, hickory, oak, and cherry trees attract loads of tasty insects during summer, and in the winter they extend your feeders' reach with pine seeds, hickory nuts, acorns, and cherries. Some woodpeckers may even choose to stick around for a while: They hammer cavities into the sides of larger trees to nest during breeding season. Many other bird species take shelter in these nest cavities during the off-season, too.

Finches

Birds: House Finch, Purple Finch, American Goldfinch, Pine Siskin
Attract Them With: Composite flowers (Asteraceae family), spruces (*Abies* sp.), hemlocks (*Tsuga* sp.), and pines (*Pinus* sp.)

It's fitting that colorful finches are attracted to the colorful flowers in the daisy (Asteraceae) family. Daisies, which include sunflowers, thistles, and asters, produce the small seeds favored by finches, and also the downy fibers used to line nests.

The seeds of conifers, such as spruce, hemlock, and pines, are also important food sources for finches. The trees provide shelter during winter, and needles for nest-building in the summer.

Bird Sightings – April 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: This month's report starts on March 23 because later March sightings could not be included in last month's column. No space for other commentary this month!

Seen in our Core Counties (listed above)

Ring-necked Duck	Apr 28	JEF-Lawhon Rd (1) Caled Gordon
Hooded Merganser	Apr 28	JEF-Lawhon Rd (2) Caleb Gordon (females)
Least Grebe	Mar 23-Apr 24	JEF-TP (up to 2) HS et al
Wood Stork	Apr 16	HAI-US69 Silsbee (1) Simone Marler, John Coons
White-tailed Hawk	JEF-SW (1)	Andrew Dickinson (adult)
Yellow Rail	JEF-Texas Point NWR (1)	Adam Zions
Purple Gallinule	Mar 27	JEF-TP (1) HS (early)
	Mar 30	JEF-TP (1) JHH
Red-necked Phalarope	Apr 26-27	JEF-TP (1) Steve Mayes et al
Lesser Nighthawk	Apr 18	JEF-SRSP (1) Alan Selin
Common Nighthawk	Apr 11	JEF-SW (1) JHH (v slightly early)
Black-chinned Humm.	Apr 6-11	HAI-Rose Hill Acres (1) JM
Rufous Hummingbird	Apr 5-15	HAI-Rose Hill Acres (2) JM
Crested Caracara	Apr 15	HAI-Old Sour Lake Rd (2) JM
Great Kiskadee	Apr 8	JEF-SW (1) multiple obs
	Apr 10-12	JEF-Hwy 87 nr McFaddin entrance (1) Steve Dillinger
Couch's Kingbird	Apr 22-23	JEF-SW (1) Dominic LeCroossette et al
Warbling Vireo	Apr 5	JEF-SW (1) JHH (early)
Yellow-green Vireo	Apr 22-30	JEF-SW (1) multiple obs
Brown Creeper	Apr 7	JEF-SW (1) JHH, MC
Ovenbird	Mar 27	JEF-SW (1) JHH (early)
Worm-eating Warbler	Mar 25	JEF-SW (2) MC, JHH, SM, TH et al
Northern Waterthrush	Mar 25	JEF-SW (1) JHH, MC, SH, SM, TH. et al (early)
Swainson's Warbler	Mar 25	JEF-SW (1) JHH, SM, MC, JAW et al (very early)
Cape May Warbler	Apr 20-23	JEF-SW (1) multiple obs (male)
Cerulean Warbler	Apr 1	JEF-SW (1) SM- TH (early)
Yellow Warbler	Apr 7	JEF-SW (1) JHH, Chris Bergmann (early)
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	Apr 19-20	JEF-SW (1) multiple obs (male)
Wilson's Warbler	Mar 24	HAI-Rose Hill Acres (1) JM
	Apr 6	HAI-Rose Hill Acres (1) JM
Western Tanager	Apr 23	JEF-Texas Pt NWR (1) Fred Collins
Blue Grosbeak	Mar 25	JEF-SW (2) Jenn Murphy (early)
Purple Finch	Mar 25	SAB-Sabinetown (3) David Bell

Nearby Counties (very rare species only)

Common Goldeneye	Apr 22	GAL-BF (1) Alejandro Santillana
Black Scoter	Apr 8	CAM-Holly Beach (1) David Booth
Ring-necked Pheasant	Apr 6	CHA-White Ranch Road just E of TX124 (1) Laurie Baker
Least Grebe	Apr 7	CHA-ANWR-Shoveler Pond (1) Gene Stagner (no details)
Wood Stork	Apr 13	GAL-Rollover Pass (8) Scheil Zende (distant flock)
	Apr 15	GAL-Loop108 Pt Bolivar (1) Sue Peters-Ferree, Alrry Goodman
Brown Booby	Apr 18	GAL-Gulf shore nr, High Is (1) Eric Secker
	Apr 21	GAL-Gulf shore on Bolivar Peninsula (1) Michael O'Brien
Glossy Ibis	Mar 18-Apr 27	CHA-ANWR-Shoveler Pond (1) multiple obs
	Apr 5	CHA-FM1985 ~ 5mi W of TX124 (1) Nina Rach

	Apr 5	CHA-Lagow Ranch (1) Chuck Davis, David Hansen et al
	Apr 30	CHA-S Pear Orchard Rd (1) Dwayne Liteer
Swainson's Hawk	Mar 23	CAM-LA82 nr. Bridge across Sabine Lake (1) James Holmes
Parasitic Jaeger	Mar 26-Apr 12	GAL-BF (1) Mark Bartosik et al
Franklin's Gull	Mar 24	CAM-Holly Beach (1) James Holmes
Thayer's Gull	Apr 2-6	GAL-Bolivar Ferry (1) Ron Weeks, Joanie and Mark Hubinger
Iceland Gull	Apr 11	GAL-BF (1) Kevin Karlson et al
Gt. Black-backed Gull	Apr 4-29	GAL-BF (1) Ron Weeks et al
Lesser Nighthawk	Apr 30	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Paul Conover
Calliope Hummingbird	Mar 23-26	CHA-Baytown Magnolia Bend (1) Jan and David Hanson et al
Crested Caracara	Apr 13	LIB-FM61 at CR117 (1) Colette and Paul Micallef (spreading north)
	Apr 18	LIB-CR2274 at CR2278A (2) Paul Micallef
Great Kiskadee	Mar 24-Apr 15	CHA-Tri City Beach Rd (2) J. Berner, Drew Dickert, Tony Frank, Carl Poldrack et al
	Mar 29	CAL-Sam Houston Jones SP (1) Deanna Griggs
	Apr 22	GAL-High Island Smith Oaks (1) Dennis Shepler, Tim Keitt et al
Yellow-green Vireo	Apr 28	GAL-High Island (1) Laurie Ross
Fish Crow	Apr 12	CHA-Winnie Quality Inn (1) Curtis McCamy
	Apr 22-24	CHA-Winnie Inn (2) Ilya Povalyaev, Jeff Mundy
	Apr 14	CHA-ANWR (1) Karen Rubinstein
Bank Swallow	Mar 27	LIB-Romayor (2) Laurie Byrd (no details)
Cave Swallow	Apr 17	CAL-LA108 nr Fabacher Rd (6) Carla Dengler and Sam Miller
Pine Warbler	Apr 15	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Michael Nicodemus
Magnolia Warbler	Apr 2	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Paul Conover (early)
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	Apr 23	CAM-Sabine Lighthouse Rd (1) James Holmes et al
Rose-breast. Grosbeak	Mar 31	CAM-Peveto Woods (1 female) Penny Garsee (early)
Western Tanager	Apr 8-16	CAM-Peveto Woods (1 male) David Booth, Patty Palmer et al
Lazuli Bunting	Apr 27	GAL-Boy Scout Woods (1) Sam Woods et al
Painted Bunting	Mar 29	CHA-Oyster Bayou HC (1 male) Gene Campbell (early)
	Mar 31	CAL-Peveto Woods (1 male) Penny Garsee (early)

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 – (continued on page 7)

Field Trip to Sabine Woods – 22 April 2017

Migration is highly variable with many changes from day to day. One day may be slow while the next day may be filled with birds. Unfortunately, when scheduling field trips months in advance, the best day cannot be anticipated and one just has to trust to luck. So it has been with the Golden Triangle Audubon Society's April field trips to Sabine Woods. Sometimes, the group has hit the day perfectly and the trees are dripping with warblers, tanagers and grosbeaks. In other years, the group misses the big bird spectacle. By one day.

The 2017 field trip was looked forward to with anticipation as there was a front forecasted for the weekend. Every birder on the coast knows that spring cold fronts can equal great birding days – if the timing is right. That did not happen on the field trip day for this year. It seems that the timing wasn't quite right and it so delayed the birds getting into the coast that most did not arrive until after dark or even until the next morning! So Sunday turned into a true birding spectacle but Saturday was a little slow. But that doesn't mean there were no highlights.

Warblers are really the group of birds that are first thought of when a birder goes out during spring migration and there were a few to be had on the day. A Worm-eating Warbler was seen probing dead leaves and giving its "zip-zip" call. Common Yellowthroats were heard singing from the wet thickets while a Black and White Warbler was seen foraging along the tree trunks and branches. A Northern Waterthrush bobbed its tail around the shore of the pond while a Yellow-breasted Chat was heard (and seen by a few) near RoseAnne's drip. A couple of yellow and black Hooded Warblers hunted the underbrush, flashing their white outer tail feathers constantly. But the warbler highlight of the day was certainly the male Cape May Warbler present in the large mulberry tree in the southeastern part of the sanctuary. The Cape May was present the day before and it was hoped that it would hang around for the field trip day and, luckily, it did. The Cape May was loyal to the mulberry and continuously returned to it time and time again making it easy to locate (with a little patience). The tiger striping underneath and the chestnut face patch set against yellow background plumage certainly make the Cape May one of our most visually striking warblers. Combine that with the relative scarcity of the species on the upper Texas coast (most migrate through Florida) and you get a bird that everyone wants to see and enjoy! Despite a less than stellar day for migrants, the Cape May Warbler made the whole trip worthwhile for much of the group.

But warblers were not the only species seen on the day. Though it might have taken some looking there were other attractive species around with the same large mulberry tree being a favorite stopping point for many of them. Orchard Orioles were fairly common and easily seen on the day and a few Blue Grosbeaks were also located. The brilliant red of Scarlet and Summer Tanagers were evident among the mulberry trees though not in large numbers. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks also foraged for fruit and Indigo Buntings were seen along the edges of the fields. Dickcissels were first heard and later seen singing from a tree top while a single multi-colored Painted Bunting was also found. Thrushes in the form

of Gray-cheeked and Swainson's Thrush and American Robin were seen along with a stealthy Yellow-billed Cuckoo. A Bank Swallow was picked out among the more numerous Tree and Northern Rough-winged Swallows. An Eastern Wood-Pewee gave its mournful call while Eastern Kingbirds chattered away. A young Great Horned Owl perched in a distant tree was a nice late day find for some of the birders.

But this field trip was also about the ones that got away (at least temporarily). A Couch's Kingbird was seen (and heard) previously but was not very cooperative and few were able to get on the bird. Even more exciting was when a visiting birder from France snapped a photo of an apparent Yellow-green Vireo! There was much searching the area but, unfortunately, the group could not relocate this rare species. Disappointing misses for the field trip but, for the persistent birder, both species continued to hang around and were seen by a number of people in the next few days.

The Saturday field trip may not have been perfect but the Cape May Warbler along with a few other good birds still made for a nice day. And the tease of rare species and an upcoming front lured many birders back on Sunday and they were definitely rewarded! Sunday was filled with birds as tanagers, thrushes and grosbeaks poured in off the gulf, giving exactly the kind of day all birders look for in the spring.

The following birds were recorded by the trip leaders:

Neotropic Cormorant(2); Great Egret(2); Snowy Egret(2); Little Blue Heron(1); Tricolored Heron(4); Green Heron(3); Yellow-crowned Night-Heron(1); White Ibis(20); Turkey Vulture(2); Osprey(1); King/Clapper Rail(1); Black-necked Stilt(1); Royal Tern(1); White-winged Dove(1); Yellow-billed Cuckoo(1); Great Horned Owl(1); Common Nighthawk(1); Red-bellied Woodpecker(1); Downy Woodpecker(4); Crested Caracara(1); Eastern Wood-Pewee(1); Great Crested Flycatcher(3); Eastern Kingbird(6); Loggerhead Shrike(1); Red-eyed Vireo(1); Blue Jay(5); Northern Rough-winged Swallow(30); Tree Swallow(10); Bank Swallow(1); Sedge Wren(1); Carolina Wren(1); Veery(4); Gray-cheeked Thrush(5); American Robin(1); Gray Catbird(2); Brown Thrasher(2); Northern Mockingbird(1); European Starling(5); Cedar Waxwing(15); Worm-eating Warbler(1); Northern Waterthrush(1); Black and White Warbler(1); Common Yellowthroat(2); Hooded Warbler(2); Cape May Warbler(1); Yellow-breasted Chat(1); Summer Tanager(3); Scarlet Tanager(2); Northern Cardinal(4); Rose-breasted Grosbeak(6); Blue Grosbeak(3); Indigo Bunting(5); Painted Bunting(1); Dickcissel(2); Red-winged Blackbird(10); Common Grackle(15); Boat-tailed Grackle(2); Great-tailed Grackle(6); Brown-headed Cowbird(8); Orchard Oriole(10).

Steve Mayes

Sightings *(continued from page 6)*

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.

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