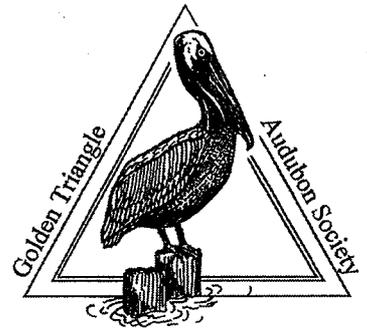


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 23 No. 6

June 2017

Summer Break!

As usual, there will be no membership meetings in June or July. Our next meeting will be on **THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 2017** at 7:00 p.m. in the Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont, Texas. The August program will be on a birding trip to South Texas by Dana Nelson and Harlan Stewart. Further details will be published in the August issue of the *Brown Pelican*.

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

Editorial

On 4 May 2017, David Yarnold, President, National Audubon Society, wrote to members about the federal spending agreement through the end of the fiscal year. The following are excerpts from this letter.

Back in early March, after the administration's federal budget proposal was released, I wrote: "*Keep in mind a president's budget proposal is just that: an opening bid.*"

Well, I have some good news: the final spending agreement for the rest of the fiscal year provides strong funding for important conservation programs and proves that a bipartisan commitment to conservation still exists—even in a hyperpolarized political environment like the one we have today.

With your help, Audubon successfully urged Congress to protect key places like the Great Lakes, Long Island Sound, and Florida's Everglades; keeping the Arctic Refuge safe from oil and gas drilling; ensuring science-based and locally-driven implementation of 67 million acres of sage-grouse conservation plans; and increasing support for water conservation and drought relief programs.

.....

A few highlights from the budget that help birds and people:

- EPA's regional programs ... will retain their current funding in the Chesapeake Bay and Great Lakes, while doubling for the Long Island Sound and the Gulf of Mexico.
- The Department of the Interior will receive an increase in support, including \$8.9 million in additional funding for sage-grouse conservation plans.
- More support for the Department of Energy's energy efficiency programs, an important driver of carbon pollution reductions.
- The USDA's budget includes a whopping \$150 million in drought-relief efforts for a beleaguered and arid West—a major victory for millions of people and countless birds.

The Brown Pelican

Vol. 23, No.6 June 2017
Issue number 240

Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Web Site for more information
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

Sherrie Roden (409-962-7911)

Vice-President

Dana Nelson (409-790-3286)

Treasurer

Harlan Stewart (409 727-4441)

Secretary

John Whittle (409-722-4193)

Directors-at-Large

Edra Bogucki (409-835-7245)

Michael Cooper (832-876-4912)

Gerald Duhon (409-899-3368)

Sherry Gibson (409-385-6302)

John Haynes (409-724-6842)

Gary Kelley (409-697-2346)

Randy Lewis (409-617-1070)

John Mariani (985-373-5016)

Steve Mayes (409-722-5807)

Christine Sliva (409-782-1832)

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Program

Jana Whittle (409-722-4193)

Field Trips

Steve Mayes (409-722-5807)

Conservation

Gary Kelley (409-697-2346)

Membership, Publicity

Sheila Hebert (409-767-1216)

Education

Volunteer needed

Webmaster

Jeff Pittman (geojeff@geojeff.org)

Facebook Administrators

John Mariani (985-373-5016)

Jana Whittle (409-722-4193)

Newsletter Distribution

Mary Stafford (409-460-3653)

Newsletter Editor

John Whittle (409-722-4193)

(Johnawhittle@aol.com)

The Brown Pelican is

published monthly except July by the Golden Triangle Audubon Society, P. O. Box 1292, Nederland, Texas 77627-1292

Calendar of Events

Important Note: Field Trip notices published here should always be regarded as needing confirmation just before the date. Changes will always be posted on the web site at www.goldentriangleaudubon.org. Confirmation of the location will also normally be available at the Membership Meeting that is usually, but not always, two days prior to each trip, or by contacting Field Trip Committee chair, Steve Mayes at 409-722-5807 or sgmayes@hotmail.com.

Saturday August 5. Field Trip to Liberty-Dayton Area. During the first half of August each year, Swallow-tailed Kites congregate in the Trinity River bottomlands between Liberty and Dayton for two or three weeks before they migrate south for the winter.

We will meet at 8:00 AM at the McDonalds at 1923 Highway 90 in Liberty. This is on the north side of the Highway at the intersection with Travis Street, one block west of Main St/Highway 227. Carpooling is highly desirable on this trip. The part of the trip looking for kites does not **necessitate** extensive walking, although the group will probably do quite a bit on the trails. The trip will probably not last much beyond noon.

We will check the area along Highway 90 between Liberty and Dayton, perhaps several times, and also the Liberty Municipal Park area. Recently, there have been trail improvements and a new boardwalk has been constructed so that a section of the Trinity River NWR can be easily accessed from the Park. We will check that area for early southbound migrants. In addition to the Swallow-tailed Kites, there are usually Mississippi Kites flying low in the residential areas of Liberty north of US 90. Depending on how wet the area is, there may be other birds characteristic of bottomlands.

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

Thursday August 17. Membership Meeting. Program will be on a birding trip to South Texas by Dana Nelson and Harlan Stewart.

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank Linda Davis, Lisa and Craig Geoffroy, Sheila Hebert, Denise Kelley, Dana Nelson, Lynn Otto, Sherrie Roden, Phil Rogers, Harlan Stewart and anyone we have accidentally omitted for bringing refreshments in May. **We need volunteers to bring items for all fall meetings.** Pick the meeting at which you want to help. We do not expect one person to bring everything, but please call so we can coordinate. Even if you can just bring drinks and cookies or something similar, please call Jana Whittle at (409) 722-4193 (or email her at janafw@aol.com) **as far in advance as possible.** Please help if you can.

Saturday August 26. Field Trip to Bolivar Flats. (One week later than usual.) We will meet at the vehicle barrier at Bolivar Flats at 8:30 a.m. Take Highway 124 south from Winnie about 20 miles through High Island. At the shoreline, turn right along Highway 87 and proceed approximately 25 miles through Gilchrist and Crystal Beach until you come to the intersection with Loop 108. At that intersection, turn left (south -- the opposite direction from Loop 108) on Rettilon Road to the beach. If conditions permit, drive onto the sand and turn right to the vehicle barrier (about 1/2 mile). It is about a 90-minute drive, with no allowance for stops, from Beaumont or mid-County to the Flats.

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



EarthShare of Texas represents Audubon Foundation of Texas and the National Audubon Society in payroll contribution programs in workplaces throughout Texas. For more information about how you can support Audubon Foundation of Texas and the National Audubon Society at your workplace, call 1-800-GREENTX, or visit www.earthshare-texas.org

Bird Sightings – May 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: Deciding whether a migrant is sufficiently late to be rare or very rare is particularly difficult in May. The eBird filters for each county are set separately for each county by the eBird reviewers. While we use these as guides, we often refer to the Upper Texas Coast Checklist published by the Houston Outdoor Nature Club, but make allowance for recent changes and some geographic considerations.

Seen in our Core Counties (listed above)

Green-winged Teal	thru May 29	JEF-TP (2) HS, JHH, Sheila Hebert (crippled birds)
Least Grebe	May 7-28	JEF-TP (up to 10) JM, HS, JHH, Sheila Hebert
Yellow Rail	May 6	JEF-SRSP (1) Jean Nichols
Lsr. Black-backed Gull	May 1	JEF-SW (1) Justin Bosler (flyover)
Glaucous Gull	May 13	JEF-SRSP (1) Steve Mayes
Lesser Nighthawk	May 1	JEF-SW (1) Sidney Gauthreaux, JAW
Crested Caracara	May 27	HAI-Old Sour Lk Rd (1) Ryan Shaw (range expansion)
Couch's Kingbird	May 1	JEF-Hwy 87 at Panther Pipeline Station west of Sabine Pass (1) Sidney Gauthreaux
Blue-headed Vireo	Apr 30	JEF-SW (2) multiple obs (late)
Black-whiskered Vireo	May 4-5	JEF-SW (1) JHH, multiple obs
Veery	May 23	JEF-SW (2) JHH, MC, Ron Berwick
	May 25	JEF-SW (1) J&L Bryan (late)
Blue-winged Warbler	May 23	JEF-SW (1) JHH, MC, Ron Berwick
Prairie Warbler	May 6	JEF-SW (1) Gary Binderim
Black-thr. Green Warbler	May 23	JEF-SW (5) MC, JHH, Ron Berwick
	May 25	JEF-SW (1) J&L Bryan
White-crowned Sparrow	May 13	JEF-SW (1) SM, TH, et al
Western Tanager	May 2-4	JEF-SW (1) Colette Micallef, Sidney Gauthreaux et al (imm male)
Lazuli Bunting	May 6	JEF-SW (1) Tony Frank

Nearby Counties (very rare species only)

Northern Gannet	May 5	GAL-Beach SE of High Is (Meghan Beatty)
Glossy Ibis	Apr 30-May 5	CHA-S Pear Orchard Rd (1) Robert Behrstock
	May 7-21	CHA-ANWR (1) Mark Gorges, et al
Greater Scaup	May 4	GAL-BF (1) Liston Rice
Surf Scoter	May 7	CAM-Martin Beach (2) David Muth, Paul Conover, Curtis Sorrells et al
	May 26-27	GAL-BF (1) Sonny Bratz, Mark Bartosik
	May 30	CAM-Holly Beach (1) Katie Barnes
Black Scoter	May 26	CAM-LA27/82 (1) Gerry Click
Long-tailed Duck	May 1-4	GAL-High Island (1) Don Hoechlin
	May 2-13	GAL-BF (1) John Faber, Jeremy Webster et al
Canvasback	May 1	CHA-ANWR Shoveler Pond (1) Sidney Gauthreaux
Black Rail	May 23	CAM-Holly Beach (1) Katie Barnes (heard only)
Thayer's Gull	May 1	GAL-BF (1) John Faber
Lsr. Black-backed Gull	May 24	CAM-Holly Beach (2) Cameron Rutt (late)
Glaucous Gull	May 21	CAM-Holly Beach (1) Paul Conover (photos suggest likely same bird as on Sea Rim May 13)
Lesser Nighthawk	Apr 30-May 7	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Paul Conover et al

Gt. Black-backed Gull	Apr 4-May 6	GAL-BF (1) Ron Weeks et al
Crested Caracara	May 12	LIB-FM1413 (1) Paul Micallef
American Kestrel	May 21	CAM-off LA82 E of Johnson Bayou (1) Paul Conover
Merlin	May 4	GAL-High Is Smith Oaks (1) Larry Geiger (late)
Peregrine Falcon	May 4	CHA-Smith Pt (1) Gene Campbell
	May 16	CHA-ANWR (1) Terry Little, Gary Randol
Vermilion Flycatcher	May 16	GAL-Tuna Rd (1) James Russo
Great Kiskadee	thru May 29	CHA-Augusta St, Northpoint (2) Carl Poldrack et al
Western Kingbird	May 13	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Paul Conover, Phillip Wallace
Gray Kingbird	May 24	CAM-Holly Beach (1) Lisa Elizondo
Louisiana Waterthrush	May 2	GAL-High Is Smith Oaks (1) Fran Holmes (late)
Black-and-white Warbler	May 23-24	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) David Booth, Van Remsen (sl.late)
Tennessee Warbler	May 23	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) David Booth (sl. late)
Palm Warbler	May 6	CHA-ANWR (1) Joshua Lively et al
Prairie Warbler	May 1-2	GAL-High Island Smith Oaks (1) John Groves, Richard Hermosillo
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	May 2,	CAM-Peveto Woods(1) Katie Barnes
Black-thr. Green Warbler	May 23-24	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) David Booth, Van Remsen (sl. late)
	May 25	GAL-High Is. Smith Oaks (1) Meghan Beatty (sl. Late)
Chipping Sparrow	Apr 30	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Erik Johnson (late)
	May 5	CAM-Lighthouse Rd (1) Cameron Rutt
White-crowned Sparrow	May 5	CAM-Lighthouse Rd (1) Cameron Rutt (late)
Lincoln's Sparrow	May 5	CAM-Lighthouse Rd (4) Cameron Rutt (late)
Swamp Sparrow	May 5	CAM-Lighthouse Rd (4) Cameron Rutt (late)
Western Tanager	Apr 30	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Danny Dobbs
Black-headed Grosbeak	May 3	GAL-High Island Boy Scout Woods (1) Betsy Mellor (no details)
Baltimore Oriole	May 28	GAL-Pt Bolivar (1) Donna Sanders

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.

Nearly 400 Migratory Birds Were Killed by One Texas Building in a Single Night

Animal Services was able to rescue just three birds after a massive number of spring migrants hit a glass-sided tower in Galveston.

By Meghan Bartels

From the Audubon Website May 05, 2017

The numbers are horrifying: 90 Nashville Warblers, 60 Blackburnian Warblers, 42 Chestnut-sided Warblers, 41 Ovenbirds—and that’s just four of the 25 dead species collected from the 23-story American National Insurance building in Galveston, Texas, on Thursday morning. In total, 395 small feathered bodies were found, and they were all victims of building collisions.

Josh Henderson, the head of Animal Services for the Galveston Police Department, was called to the scene at 7:20 a.m. He was able to rescue three of the stunned birds, which were then taken to a wildlife triage center. But the sheer number of casualties shocked him. “This is the largest event like this I have ever been a part of in over 10 years,” Henderson said in a press release.

After sorting and IDing the bodies, Henderson’s final list also included: 29 Yellow Warblers, 26 Black-and-white Warblers, 24 Magnolia Warblers, 21 American Redstarts, 15 Indigo Buntings, 8 Black-throated Green Warblers, 5 Kentucky Warblers, 4 Eastern Wood-Peewees, 3 Golden-winged Warblers, 2 Painted Buntings, 2 Orchard Orioles, plus a Hooded Warbler, Gray Catbird, Blue Grosbeak, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Orange-crowned Warbler, Summer Tanager, Worm-eating Warbler, Red-eyed Vireo, and Cerulean Warbler.

Window and building strikes are a common problem for songbirds, particularly in cities located in popular migration flyways. The island of Galveston lies in the Gulf of Mexico, which is a common crossover point for flocks coming up from the Yucatan and Latin America. With spring migration in full swing, hundreds of thousands of birds are currently racing through the region to reach their northern breeding grounds. To make matters worse, Galveston got almost a quarter inch of rain on Wednesday, which might have encouraged the long-distance travelers to look for shelter.

When birds encounter glass, they see the image it reflects rather than a hard surface; so when a building’s internal or external lights are left on overnight—the latter being the case for the American National Insurance building—birds can easily get disoriented. Some might think it’s a place to rest, especially if they spy office plants inside, while others might just see a clear passage. Both can cause them to crash into windows or even the side of the building—often to a fatal end. After surviving a trek that takes them over hundreds of miles of land and open water, it’s an unjust end for the intrepid migrants.

The good news is that there are some ways people can help prevent these collisions. Cities can encourage building managers to turn off overnight fixtures during spring and fall migration. Several Audubon groups have convinced their local governments to do just that through the Lights Out initiative (see here for a full list of places). Owners of skyscrapers and other large structures can also invest in industry-tested, “bird-friendly” products, including glass that’s patterned so avian eyes can see it. Other urban centers have citizen science networks that collect data on collisions. In New York City and Dallas, for instance, pedestrians can report dead or injured avians to D-Bird, a project founded by New York City Audubon.

If you’re worried that the glass in your own home or office poses a danger, consider using decals or netting, as well as turning lights off or closing drapes, to keep birds from being fooled. These are all small steps, but if there’s a lesson to be learned from Galveston, it’s that even one building can have a huge impact.

Lights Out for the Texas Skyscraper That Caused Hundreds of Songbird Deaths

With input from local wildlife groups and birders, the owners are shutting down the lights and turning up the dialogue around bird-friendly practices.

By Purbita Saha

From the Audubon Website, May 12, 2017

The American National Insurance building in Galveston, Texas, kept its floodlights off last night—a major change for the city's skyline. Twenty-five different species of passerines were killed after crashing into the lit-up tower last week. The owners are hoping a dimmer ambience will prevent further deaths during spring migration.

Last night the 32-story American National Insurance skyscraper in Galveston, Texas, elected not to turn its floodlights on for the first time in decades. Typically, 20 white beams are used to illuminate the plaza each evening. But yesterday, it remained dim, save for a few office windows and a string of green safety lights that run along the tip of the tower. Why? To save birds.

One week ago, 395 warblers, grosbeaks, and other passerines flew into the dazzling floodlights and collided with the building's windows. Only three individuals were rescued the following morning. The survivors were transported to a wildlife hospital via the Galveston Bay Injured Bird Response Team, which is run by Audubon Texas and other coastal conservation groups.

The floodlights will remain off for the rest of the season, says Bruce LePard, the senior vice president of American National Insurance. Leaders from the company met with representatives from Houston Audubon and the Galveston County Audubon Group yesterday afternoon, and will be working with them and with officials from the City of Galveston to draw up preventative measures before fall migration. One potential idea for One Moody Plaza includes adding a pulse on the green safety bulbs to make them less disorienting to birds. Meanwhile, the entire city might adopt a Lights Out initiative. Houston Audubon is also designing an email alert system for local building owners that will let them know when flight conditions are risky for birds, either due to inclement weather or low visibility. These warnings could prompt them to go dark for the night.

“The Texas coast is the first land these migrants encounter after crossing the Gulf of Mexico. So right away they're looking for habitat,” says Richard Gibbons, conservation manager for Houston Audubon. Some of those exhausted birds might seek shelter in the city, which is about as safe as a demolition zone. Beyond slamming into windows, they can get caught in fishing lines, contract parasites, and die from starvation.

But that doesn't make the region any less important for birds. The relationship goes both ways, too: Birding is a major cornerstone in the coastal economy, Gibbons says. “It's a big part of the natural heritage. People care for and love the wildlife here.” In fact, many of the individuals who work in the American National Insurance building are birders, and they spoke up after last week's collisions. “It helped rally our employees around the cause,” LePard says. “We really want to mitigate this from ever happening again and be better corporate citizens.” The plan for doing that that may still be in its infant stages—but for anyone who looks out at Galveston

Jefferson County Spring Migration Count -- 13 May 2017

This is the expanded version of the narrative report on the count.

The Migration Count was held on the day after a frontal passage produced winds with a northerly component, resulting in good birding for passerine migrants along the coast and good birding weather for the rest of the county. The result was a final species count of 192, the second highest in the 22 year history of the count, surpassed only by the 197 in 2013. The number of individual birds was just a little low, probably reflecting a very slightly below average number of participants.

We now have a long period of Spring Migration Count results, and we are increasingly able to detect trends in the number of birds we find. The count is a "migration" count, aimed at exploring spring migration over the United States. As such, the timing, on the Saturday of the second full weekend in May, International Migratory Bird Day and Global Big Day, is geared to the peak passage through the northern tier of the United States, and is significantly later than is normally regarded as the peak along the Gulf coast. However, the real story is that weather conditions adverse to trans-Gulf migration are increasingly rare after the last week of April, and the number of birds seen along the coast drops off very quickly. Nevertheless, as the occasional May cold frontal passage amply demonstrates, there are in fact still good numbers of migrants crossing the Gulf, and they will descend into the coastal migrant traps if they encounter adverse conditions; if conditions are normal, most press on further north riding the southern winds which normally prevail. This year, count day turned out to be one of the relatively rare May days when birds descend in numbers on reaching the coast. In the account that follows, in analyzing the results, we paid more attention to species other than the classical neotropical migrants, because the numbers of other species – year round residents, departing winter residents and arriving summer residents – are much less affected by the wind and weather conditions on the day of the count.

We have four principal species of duck that are present year round. Of these, the number of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks was a normal 85 after last year's exceptional 242. Fulvous Whistling Ducks were a "high normal" 57, as usual mostly in Cattail Marsh, in a year when anecdotal reports suggest the local breeding population is above average. The longer-established Mottled Duck, a species of some significant concern, produced a healthy 46, but this is still below the norms of the 1990s. Blue-winged Teal is the only "local" duck species that winters in significant numbers south of the United States, and as such, numbers found on count day can be quite variable. The 88 seen is actually a relatively low number. Wood Ducks are generally easier to find just north of Jefferson County. This year's high count resulted mostly from finding 11 in the wetlands at the Salt Water Barrier on the Neches River in Beaumont. Other waterfowl seen were basically lingering winterers. Green-winged Teal is unusual by count day, but this year, the reason for the presence of two females in Cattail Marsh is known. These birds each lack one outer wing, and almost certainly cannot fly. Many past

records of Green-winged Teal and perhaps other lingering ducks may well be the result of less obvious physical impairments. This year, the other species included four Lesser Scaup (on Pleasure Island), one Red-breasted Merganser (on the ship channel), and a rather high 19 Ruddy Ducks (on Pleasure Island). None of these were likely to be cripples from hunting activity, however.

Northern Bobwhite is a species that is frequently calling in May in west Jefferson County, and thus more completely censused than it would be at other times of the year. This ground-nesting species has suffered from the ravages of fire ant predation on chicks and the low number this year is further cause for concern.

Least Grebes were not an expected species locally until 2012. The species has a reputation for being secretive, and even if they are present, they may not be located on any given day. However, over the past nine months or so, an increasing population in Cattail Marsh has become very visible and much less secretive and is now raising young for the second time. Eight of the 10 known birds there were recorded on count day. Other grebes are lingering winter residents by mid-May. One or two Pied-billed Grebes is not unusual, but the Eared Grebe on Pleasure Island was the first we have seen on the count.

Neotropic Cormorants were present in high number, although not as high as last year. Anhinga numbers returned to normal after an exceptional number in 2016. Not finding any American White Pelicans was unusual, although this has happened before in the 1990s and early 2000s. Missing them in one year is not a cause for alarm. There were the usual number of Brown Pelicans.

Least Bitterns are found locally in a surprisingly wide variety of locations, almost everywhere there is an adequate area of reeds, as this year. Great Blue Herons are relatively conspicuous because of their size, but total numbers are usually not very high, as this year, if somewhat variable. The numbers of the other herons were mostly very normal. Snowy Egrets have been numerous this winter and spring and a slightly elevated number validates this observation. Little Blue Herons were also somewhat more numerous, especially in Cattail Marsh. There were no Reddish Egrets found along the coast; Jefferson County is apparently just a little east of the nearest population, although we do often find a wandering immature bird in the fall.

Gregarious species such as White Ibis can be expected to vary in numbers significantly from year to year. The White Ibis numbers were a little high, but not particularly concentrated geographically. Dark Ibis were normal, and for the fifth year in a row, Glossy Ibis was recorded. Interestingly, the numbers of this species have remained low since the recognition in the early 1990s that there were a very few around. The Glossy Ibis is usually found away from the large flocks of dark ibis that are common in Southeast Texas. Knowing the full extent of the Glossy Ibis population east of the Atchafalaya in Louisiana is hindered by very unscientific

philosophy in Christmas Counts and by eBird in some counties and parishes that dark ibis not able to be scrutinized closely, or not in a plumage that allows determination, should be defaulted to White-faced Ibis rather than recorded as *Plegadis* species or Glossy/White-faced Ibis.

Vulture numbers were very much normal. Six Ospreys was high for a species that was unknown locally in May until 2008. More may be contemplating nesting south of the historical breeding range. The failure to find a White-tailed Kite, while disappointing, happens on about half of our counts. It is not a cause for concern, and it may be that they are usually sitting on eggs by mid-May. The first ever Swallow-tailed Kite recorded on the spring count was in 2010 and the species has now been recorded on the last four successive counts. This year's bird was seen over Pine Island Bayou at the Edgewater Picnic Area. A few Mississippi Kites were found, as usual, for a species that breeds in vary small numbers locally.

Although a small number of Northern Harriers does over-summer locally, we did not find one this year. Almost all Sharp-shinned Hawks head north for the summer, and we found no lingerers this year. Any *Accipiter* in the late spring and summer is likely to be a Cooper's Hawk and we did record one. Bald Eagles have been nesting in Cattail Marsh since the winter of 2011/12, and are now on their second nest. An immature, presumably this year's offspring, was seen on count day. An adult White-tailed Hawk was seen in west Jefferson County, following sightings of this species in 2014 and 2015. It seems likely that this species is very slowly expanding eastwards. Twenty-three Red-shouldered Hawks was double the recent average, and a longer term view suggests the population is increasing. For many years now, there have typically been two or three breeding pairs of Broad-winged Hawks in Jefferson County, and this year was no exception. Swainson's Hawks have been slowly increasing in numbers since the mid-1990s, but this year's 15, the first time in double figures, was a new high. The species has been slowly expanding eastwards. A few Red-tailed Hawks are still around in mid-May but nine was quite high.

King and Clapper Rails are a part of the local Avifauna. More Clapper Rails are seen than King Rails, but we suspect some significant part of that may be the greater accessibility of the brackish areas that Clapped Rails inhabit. Ignoring such effects, Clapper Rail numbers were normal, King Rail numbers a little low. Virginia Rails, previously recorded in 2013 and 2014 were seen and heard again, perhaps evidencing some increase in population. Inexplicably, Sora was neither seen nor heard last year. This year's 13 was a healthy number and it seems the numbers have increased since the 1990s. There is now a nice population of Purple Gallinules in Cattail Marsh, and likely in the essentially inaccessible areas of McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge. This year's total was a little low, while Common Gallinule numbers were very much normal. Most American Coots move north in summer, but the winter numbers are so large that a small percentage of lingering or impaired birds results in a significant total, as this year's 106.

Black-necked Stilts are very much as part of the year-round scene in Jefferson County and occur widely spread out. American Avocets are traditionally considered as a winter

species, but in recent years, significant numbers have been found in summer. None were seen in Pleasure Island, but there were some in Cattail Marsh. American Oystercatchers were recorded in very low numbers in 2013 and 2014, but the species seems to have retreated and none were found. Most plover numbers were normal – Black-bellied and Wilson's Plovers, and Killdeer. Missing Snowy Plover was disappointing, as we had thought a breeding population was developing along Sea Rim State Park and McFaddin Beach, and it may still be further west along the beach than is easily accessed.

Many sandpipers have left for points north by mid-May. Fifteen Spotted Sandpipers is actually a little low; the species does breed further north, but is essentially absent from the Gulf Coast for only a very short period comprising the whole of June and perhaps the first week of July. Greater Yellowlegs numbers were also slightly low. Lesser Yellowlegs are much more gregarious and usually found in flocks; the numbers counted are quite variable from year to year, depending on how many flocks are noted. However, 24 was the lowest in several years. There were comparatively few rice fields under cultivation or being prepared for planting in west Jefferson County, and this may account for that, and for the low number of Whimbrels and Least and White-rumped Sandpipers. The only Hudsonian Godwits found were two in Cattail Marsh. An exception to the lower numbers of inland sandpipers was a healthy number of Stilt Sandpipers, a species that has been quite numerous all spring. Most Baird's Sandpipers have passed through before count day, but stragglers are detected approximately two-thirds of the time, as this year. Pectoral Sandpipers pass through in much greater numbers, but in a similar time frame, and finding only three is below average. Many Western Sandpipers spend the winter on Gulf Coast beaches, and there were some at the Sea Rim State Park beach, although fewer than was common 15 or 20 years ago. Short-billed Dowitchers are usually mostly gone by count day; this year, none were found. Long-billed Dowitcher numbers were very low, but numbers seen in winter and earlier in the spring suggest that this was merely a case of early departure for the breeding grounds further north. Wilson's Phalaropes can be present in large numbers, but this year, the lack of large amounts of water of the depth preferred by the species seems to have left us with only a very few.

Both Laughing Gull (resident) and Ring-billed Gull (migratory) numbers were normal. It is relatively uncommon to be able to find a Franklin's Gull in Jefferson County, but this probably more reflects the difficulty of picking one out among all the resident Laughing Gulls. One was on the Sea Rim beach on count day. One of the more unusual birds seen on the count was a Glaucous Gull, a first or second winter bird with very worn primaries and coverts, detected and photographed on the beach at Sea Rim. This is only the second record of this species known from Jefferson County – the first was in late December 1995 at the Port Arthur landfill and no further details are available – and is later by one day than the previous latest spring Upper Texas Coast record. A Glaucous Gull photographed on May 21 at Holly Beach, about 30 miles further east, looks essentially identical and was presumably the same bird. Least Terns appear to have been increasing since the early 2000s along the beach, and are now

commonly seen along the ship channel as well. There was a good number of Caspian Terns this year. The species is not unusual, particularly along the beaches, but the numbers recorded are very variable as the flocks may or may not be in accessible locations. Two hundred and eleven Black Terns represents a good number, but by no means a record. It is difficult to understand the movements of this species. They are found along the upper Texas Coast from March to October, even in mid-July, and can be in either breeding or winter plumage at that time, even though the closest breeding range quoted is some 700 miles or so to the north. Two Common Terns were counted along the beach. Typically considered as a migrant species mostly passing through in April and May and even early June and again in September, October and the first half of November; a few are present outside these periods. While the normal issue with identification by birders is calling a bird as one of a rare species when it is in fact a slightly aberrant example of a more common species, the reverse is probably true of Common Tern. Many are undoubtedly passed off as Forster's Terns. Forster's Tern numbers were very normal; Royal Tern numbers were high. Sandwich Terns, present typically only in summer while Royal Terns stay year round, are almost always found in mixed flocks with Royal Terns. A good number were found on the count this year. Good numbers of Black Skimmers were found along the beaches and Pleasure Island, and this species seems to be increasing in our area.

The relatively modest number of Rock Pigeons is in line with recent years, indicating that the increase over the 1998-2008 period has levelled off. Eurasian Collared-Doves first colonized the area in 2000, but 17 is a relatively modest number, although we were not able to cover one or two areas where they concentrate. White-winged Doves are also a relatively recent addition to the area's avifauna, but also seem to have levelled off. Mourning Doves numbers remain stable even though the arrival of other dove species caused most of them to forsake the urban areas for the open areas of the county. Inca Doves on the other hand, have become relatively scarce in the last few years, after first colonizing the area in the 1990s.

We find a remarkable number of owls on these migration counts. One pair of Barn Owls is in the same private location year after year. One or two Eastern Screech-Owls and Great Horned Owls are normal; the number of Barred Owls seems to be increasing.

Common Nighthawks locally are concentrated just inland of the shoreline, but also occur in urban areas where there are lights at night, and were somewhat reduced this year. There are no longer the large communal Chimney Swift roosts that were commonplace in the 1990s, but are otherwise found in all the other unusual places. A few Ruby-throated Hummingbirds breed in the northern part of the county, but by count time they are often sitting on eggs and difficult to detect. Two was quite low. Most Belted Kingfishers have gone north to breed by count day; three is unusually high.

It is now nearly nine years since Hurricane Ike, and the increase in woodpecker habitat has presumably run its course, as severely damaged trees have fallen or been felled, and the cavities caused by limb loss or damage have mostly healed. Red-headed Woodpeckers, the species most partial to dead

trees, were not quite as numerous as in recent years. The numbers of the other three species, Red-bellied, Downy and Pileated Woodpeckers, were within norms.

No "true" falcons were seen this year, but Crested Caracaras, a species recently removed from affinities with hawks to affinities to falcons, continue to increase, hitting double figures this year for the first time.

Two species of flycatcher are routinely present in significant numbers in the summer – Eastern Kingbird and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. These species are actually closely related, and occupy the same habitat niche, but they are not present in high enough numbers to be in any danger of crowding each other out. Eastern Kingbird numbers were elevated because of late migrants still arriving along the coast. This has been a good year for Western Kingbirds, and four were found on count day. The county is very close to the eastern edge of the breeding range, and so the number present tends to be very variable. Unlike the kingbirds and Scissor-taileds, which are open country birds; Great Crested Flycatchers are woodland birds, and were present in slightly low numbers. The other flycatchers are migrant species, and were included in the coastal arrivals on count day. Also, there was an apparently elevated number of Acadian Flycatchers, which breed from the northern part of the county northwards, as migrants supplemented the already-on-territory birds. The easiest small flycatcher to identify – Eastern Wood-Pewee – was a prominent component of the migrant arrivals.

The number of Loggerhead Shrikes was within recent norms, but increasingly, these are found on wires and other perches near the shore rather than further inland.

The local summer resident vireos were augmented by migrants passing through, especially Red-eyed and Philadelphia Vireos. White-eyed Vireos, a species easily detected because of its characteristic call, and propensity to call frequently, was present in good numbers, without any number along the coast. Warbling Vireos migrate earlier than Philadelphia Vireos but there was one late migrant in Sabine Woods nevertheless. Neither the Yellow-green Vireo nor the Black-whiskered Vireo seen at Sabine Woods earlier in the season were still there.

Since the first arrival of West Nile virus to the area, we have looked at Corvid numbers carefully, because those species are especially susceptible to it. Blue Jays and American Crows were present in normal numbers, but Fish Crows were significantly down.

Purple Martins and swallow numbers were very much normal. Cliff Swallows have invaded the area only in the last very few years, and have been increasing steadily until this year, when the numbers seem to have levelled off or even decreased somewhat.

Both Carolina Chickadee and Tufted Titmouse numbers were low, for no reason that we can divine. But wren numbers, of all species, seem to be normal or only a little low. We find Blue-gray Gnatcatcher on about half the counts, and this year there were two.

Eastern Bluebird, thrush and related species numbers were all unremarkable, except for Swainson's Thrushes, present in Sabine Woods in very high numbers. We were glad to find that Northern Mockingbird numbers were within recent norms, because of the greatly reduced numbers

recorded on last fall's count. Brown Thrashers nest from Sabine Woods to the northern reaches of the county (and well beyond), and the results show that widespread distribution within the county, adding up to a very normal total.

At least 15 species of warbler are still migrating in some numbers in mid-May and when the weather forces migrant down on the coast, we get a good selection and often significant numbers. It is not insightful to detail each species seen this year. There have been prior years with weather induced concentrations at Sabine Woods – 1997, 99, 2000, 04, 07, 10, 12, 13, 14. Notable this year were 47 American Redstarts, 26 Magnolia Warblers, 19 Bay-breasted Warblers and 12 Blackburnian Warblers. We also added Nashville Warbler to the count list. Being a circum-Gulf migrant, we see far more Nashville Warblers in the fall.

By mid-May, only a few Nelson's and Savannah Sparrows and the resident Seaside Sparrows can be expected, and they were there, albeit in very small numbers as far as Savannah Sparrows are concerned. But an adult White-crowned Sparrow at Sabine Woods was totally unexpected, and, of course, another addition to the all-time count species list. Some participants suggested it was very lethargic and that perhaps it was sick.

Interestingly, no Scarlet Tanagers were seen, even though Summer Tanagers were present in normal numbers. Based on observations earlier in the spring, it may be that Scarlet Tanagers, for some reason, are migrating earlier than they used to. Northern Cardinal were present in normal numbers. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were included in the migrants, while Blue Grosbeaks were both in with the other migrants, and spread over the western part of the county where they breed along with Indigo Buntings. Painted Bunting numbers were average, as were Dickcissels.

One Bobolink was less expected but there have been a few in several recent years. All the grackles were seen in normal numbers, but Red-winged Blackbirds were somewhat low. Brown-headed Cowbirds were very low, but there was one Bronzed Cowbird, a species first seen on the count in 2010, but now becoming more expected. Orchard Orioles nest in Sabine Woods and elsewhere along the immediate coast and were there in normal numbers. Four Baltimore Orioles were included in the migrants, with one more in west Jefferson County. House Sparrow numbers were a little low, although we suspect our coverage of residential neighborhoods may have been somewhat reduced this year.

Birds recorded:

WHISTLING-DUCK, Black-bellied (85); WHISTLING-DUCK, Fulvous (57); DUCK, Wood (19); MALLARD (1); DUCK, Mottled (46); TEAL, Blue-winged (88); TEAL, Green-winged (2); SCAUP, Lesser (4); MERGANSER, Red-breasted (1); DUCK, Ruddy (19); BOBWHITE, Northern (4); GREBE, Least (8); GREBE, Pied-billed (7); GREBE, Eared (1); CORMORANT, Neotropic (315); ANHINGA (8); PELICAN, Brown (85); BITTERN, Least (11); HERON, Great Blue (21); EGRET, Great (156); EGRET, Snowy (109); HERON, Little Blue (102); HERON, Tricolored (51); EGRET, Cattle (700); HERON, Green (36); NIGHT-HERON, Black-crowned (13); NIGHT-HERON, Yellow-crowned (23); IBIS, White (185); IBIS, Glossy (1); IBIS, White-faced (29); IBIS, Plegadis species (139); SPOONBILL, Roseate (21); VULTURE, Black (56); VULTURE, Turkey (96); OSPREY (6); KITE, Swallow-tailed (1); KITE, Mississippi (6); HAWK, Cooper's (1); EAGLE, Bald (1); HAWK, White-tailed (1); HAWK, Red-shouldered (23); HAWK, Broad-winged (4); HAWK, Swainson's (15); HAWK, Red-

tailed (9); RAIL, King (2); RAIL, Clapper (32); RAIL, Virginia (2); SORA (13); GALLINULE, Purple (20); GALLINULE, Common (43); COOT, American (28); STILT, Black-necked (106); AVOCET, American (10); PLOVER, Black-bellied (39); PLOVER, Wilson's (10); PLOVER, Semipalmated (15); KILLDEER (127); SANDPIPER, Spotted (15); YELLOWLEGS, Greater (7); WILLET (41); YELLOWLEGS, Lesser (24); YELLOWLEGS species (2); WHIMBREL (21); GODWIT, Hudsonian (2); TURNSTONE, Ruddy (30); SANDPIPER, Stilt (144); SANDERLING (301); DUNLIN (23); SANDPIPER, Baird's (2); SANDPIPER, Least (46); SANDPIPER, White-rumped (446); SANDPIPER, Pectoral (3); SANDPIPER, Semipalmated (75); SANDPIPER, Western (13); SANDPIPER, Peep (49); DOWITCHER, Long-billed (2); PHALAROPE, Wilson's (7); GULL, Laughing (142); GULL, Franklin's (1); GULL, Ring-billed (7); GULL, Herring (2); GULL, Glaucous (1); TERN, Least (169); TERN, Caspian (36); TERN, Black (211); TERN, Common (2); TERN, Forster's (51); TERN, Royal (378); TERN, Sandwich (18); SKIMMER, Black (293); PIGEON, Rock (115); DOVE, Eurasian Collared- (17); DOVE, Inca (2); DOVE, White-winged (112); DOVE, Mourning (234); CUCKOO, Yellow-billed (21); OWL, Barn (2); SCREECH-OWL, Eastern (2); OWL, Great Horned (1); OWL, Barred (9); NIGHTHAWK, Common (43); SWIFT, Chimney (63); HUMMINGBIRD, Ruby-throated (3); HUMMINGBIRD, Species (2); KINGFISHER, Belted (3); WOODPECKER, Red-headed (5); WOODPECKER, Red-bellied (37); WOODPECKER, Downy (15); WOODPECKER, Pileated (8); CARACARA, Crested (12); FLYCATCHER, Olive-sided (3); WOOD-PEWEE, Eastern (43); FLYCATCHER, Yellow-bellied (2); FLYCATCHER, Acadian (8); FLYCATCHER, Traill's (1); FLYCATCHER, Least (4); FLYCATCHER, Empidonax (6); FLYCATCHER, Great Crested (12); KINGBIRD, Western (3); KINGBIRD, Eastern (158); FLYCATCHER, Scissor-tailed (54); SHRIKE, Loggerhead (72); VIREO, White-eyed (37); VIREO, Yellow-throated (6); VIREO, Warbling (1); VIREO, Philadelphia (12); VIREO, Red-eyed (29); JAY, Blue (76); CROW, American (39); CROW, Fish (13); CROW, Species (20); SWALLOW, N. Rough-winged (4); MARTIN, Purple (110); SWALLOW, Tree (14); SWALLOW, Bank (1); SWALLOW, Barn (199); SWALLOW, Cliff (1102); SWALLOW, Cave (2); SWALLOW, Cave/Cliff (19); CHICKADEE, Carolina (39); TITMOUSE, Tufted (5); WREN, Marsh (26); WREN, Carolina (20); GNATCATCHER, Blue-gray (2); BLUEBIRD, Eastern (10); VEERY (1); THRUSH, Gray-cheeked (3); THRUSH, Swainson's (54); THRUSH, Wood (2); ROBIN, American (8); CATBIRD, Gray (19); THRASHER, Brown (11); MOCKINGBIRD, Northern (408); STARLING, European (292); WAXWING, Cedar (75); OVENBIRD (1); WATERTHRUSH, Northern (2); WARBLER, Golden-winged (4); WARBLER, Black-and-white (12); WARBLER, Prothonotary (9); WARBLER, Tennessee (12); WARBLER, Nashville (1); YELLOWTHROAT, Common (54); WARBLER, Hooded (1); REDSTART, American (47); PARULA, Northern (6); WARBLER, Magnolia (27); WARBLER, Bay-breasted (24); WARBLER, Blackburnian (15); WARBLER, Yellow (4); WARBLER, Chestnut-sided (12); WARBLER, Pine (10); WARBLER, Yellow-throated (1); WARBLER, Black-throated Green (6); WARBLER, Canada (1); CHAT, Yellow-breasted (4); SPARROW, Nelson's (6); SPARROW, Seaside (39); SPARROW, White-crowned (1); SPARROW, Savannah (3); TANAGER, Summer (8); CARDINAL, Northern (142); GROSBEAK, Rose-breasted (9); GROSBEAK, Blue (17); BUNTING, Indigo (43); BUNTING, Painted (12); DICKCISSEL (180); BOBOLINK (1); BLACKBIRD, Red-winged (375); MEADOWLARK, Eastern (103); GRACKLE, Common (148); GRACKLE, Boat-tailed (113); GRACKLE, Great-tailed (267); GRACKLE, Gt./Boat-tailed (8); COWBIRD, Bronzed (1); COWBIRD, Brown-headed (82); ORIOLE, Orchard (47); ORIOLE, Baltimore (5); FINCH, House (17); SPARROW, House (100); TOTAL INDIVIDUALS (11288); TOTAL SPECIES (192)

Number of Observers (16); Number of Parties (8-10); Number of Party-Hours - Foot (19.9); Number of Party-Hours - Car (66.9); Number of Party-Hours - Stationary (4.3); Total Party-hours (91.1); (0); Number of Party-Miles - Foot (11.2); Number of Party-Miles - Car (403.2); Total Party-Miles (414.4); Participants: Jessica Barry, Sherry Gibson, John Haynes, Sheila Hebert, Thomas Hellweg, Harrison Jordan, Gary and Denise Kelley, Steve Mayes, Sherrie Roden, Christine Sliva, Harlan Stewart, Jana and John Whittle, Carolyn and William Worsham.

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

FIRST CLASS MAIL

NATIONAL AUDUBON MEMBERSHIP FORM

Membership Form

To join the National Audubon Society, please complete this form and return with Introductory Membership fee of \$20 (payable to the National Audubon Society, or indicate you wish to be billed) to National Audubon Society, Memberships, PO Box 97194, Washington, DC 20090-7194. To use this form to give a membership as a gift, please complete the form and indicate your name in the appropriate space. Payment should accompany gift memberships.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Gift from: _____

Check enclosed Please bill me
Golden Triangle Audubon C7ZW250Z

Brown Pelican SUBSCRIPTION/ MEMBERSHIP FORM

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel No: _____

RARE BIRD ALERTS

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

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

Transcriptions of many current and recent email alerts are available on the Siler's Birding on the Net at <http://birdingonthe.net/hotmail.html> Detailed information (maps and text) on birding sites on the Upper Texas Coast is also available on the Web at <http://www.texasbirding.net>.