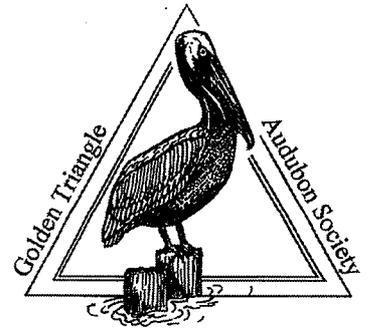


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 24 No. 2

February 2018

**Membership Meeting
Thursday February 15, 2018
Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont 7:00 p.m.**

**Birding Fundamentals
John Mariani**

John grew up in Northern California, where he started birding as a teenager. Since then he has traveled all over North America in search of birds, taught birding classes and led field trips for Santa Clara Valley (better known as "Silicon Valley") Audubon Society, and have been on so many pelagic trips that he claims he can't remember them all. After 40 years of living in California, he moved to Southeast Texas in 2003. He is also an artist who paints birds and other wildlife.

John plans to share tips for beginning birders about equipment, technology old and new, how to develop birding skills, identification pitfalls, and how to approach a difficult group of species (warning: little brown birds might be involved).

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. At this meeting, a chocolate cake will be provided by one of long-time members, Lu Skillern. Lu has provided a Barbara Bon Bon delicious chocolate cake almost every year even though she lives in Oklahoma now. Her husband was Grady Skillern who the "Skillern Tract" at Anahuac is named after because they put in a tremendous amount of volunteer hours for many years.

The Brown Pelican

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Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Web Site for more information
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. 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.

Thursday February 15, 2018. Membership Meeting. Beginning Birding by John Mariani.

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 1/2 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.

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

From IH10

Exit at Walden Road on the west side of Beaumont.

Go south of Walden Road for about 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.

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

Saturday February 17, 2018. Field Trip to Anahuac NWR. We plan to meet at the Visitor Information Station just beyond the entrance at 8:30 a.m. There are clean public flushing toilets there, accessible even when the Information Station is not open. To reach Anahuac NWR from Winnie, take Highway 124 south to FM1985. (It is 11.0 miles from IH-10 and half a mile less from Highway 73.) Turn right (west) on FM1985 and proceed about **11 miles** to the **MAIN** Anahuac NWR

Entrance Road on the left (south). (**Do not be tempted by your GPS to enter the East Unit which is only about four miles from Highway 124.**) As you drive along FM1985, check any cowbird/blackbird flocks carefully for Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

The entrance to the Main Refuge is just over 3 miles down the Entrance Road. Obey the speed limits, especially the 15 mph limit in the information station area! Watch along the entrance road, especially the west side, for Crested Caracaras, and nearer the entrance to the refuge on the east side for White-tailed Kites.

We will probably visit both the main unit ("Old Anahuac") and the Skillern Tract, looking primarily for waterfowl and other waterbirds but also raptors and sparrows. We may also bird some of the rice field areas in Chambers County.

There are geese and Bald Eagles in the refuge area this winter. Earlier in the winter a Vermilion Flycatcher stayed near the Visitor Information Station. Say's Phoebe (also near the Visitor Information Center) and Cinnamon Teal (in Shoveler Pond) are possibilities.

While it is not anticipated that this field trip will necessitate extensive walking, it is a 400 yard (1/4 mile) walk from the Skillern Tract parking area to the observation platform. All roads that we will use will be easily passable in ordinary vehicles. However, car pooling is very desirable, especially for the drive round Shoveler Pond because the road is one-car wide and there are only a few pull-offs most of which will accommodate only three or four cars. There is space to leave vehicles close to the meeting place.



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.

Saturday March 17, 2018. Field Trip to Bolivar Flats.

Important Note: Galveston County operates a parking permit program on the Bolivar Peninsula. If you park on most parts of the beach, including the part next to the Flats, you must have a parking permit on your windshield. The fee for the permit is \$10.00 a year and permits are obtainable from most merchants on the Bolivar Peninsula including the Big Store, which opens at 7:00 a.m. Currently, the permit also entitles you to park at Rollover Pass.

This trip will occur as spring shorebird migration is getting well under way, but while the wintering birds are mostly still present. Bolivar Flats is an internationally important shore-bird location. We know that a lot of birders are intimidated by shorebirds, but they are not nearly as difficult to identify as is sometimes alleged! This trip offers an opportunity to compare many of the "true" shorebirds with lots of help in identifying them.

Meet at the vehicle barrier at 8:30 a.m. From Winnie, take TX 124 south to High Island. At the shoreline, turn right (west) on TX 87 and proceed through Gilchrist and Crystal Beach until you reach the intersection where Loop 108 turns right (north). Turn left (the opposite way to Loop 108) along Rettillon Road. At the beach, if conditions permit, turn right (west) about 1/2 mile to the vehicle barrier. It takes at least one and a half hours to drive from the Golden Triangle. We will leave the vehicle barrier at about 8:45 a.m., although the group will be visually obvious on the flats should you be a few minutes later than that.

The Flats in winter always have lots of plovers, sandpipers and other wading species. A large flock of American Avocets winters there.

Some walking is necessary on this field trip. If the tide is way out, the leaders may walk up to a mile from the vehicle barrier, but you can turnaround at any point. Depending on the mud flat conditions, we may visit to the North Jetty to view the birds from that side.

We normally stop at Fort Travis Park to eat lunch and use the facilities. We may stop at Rollover Pass and often stop at High Island on the way back to check in High Island for any "very

early" Neotropic songbird migrants. Bring drinks and lunch (or buy locally, but that is not particularly easy), sunscreen and insect repellent.

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 2018 dues. You may pay at any membership meeting (checks preferred) or use the subscription/membership blank on the back page.

Dues are voluntary for National Audubon Society (NAS) members living in the Chapter's official territory, which basically covers all of Jefferson, Orange and Hardin Counties and one or two zip codes adjacent to these counties. All such NAS members automatically receive the *Brown Pelican* each month without further payment, although we do request a donation of \$15 per year if you are able.

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.

We do also welcome NAS members in other nearby counties although their membership in NAS does not automatically bring them to our attention.

Electronic Delivery of the *Brown Pelican*

We currently mail most copies of the *Brown Pelican* to members by first class mail. While we certainly do not want to cut off any members who are unable to receive a copy electronically, we encourage you, if you are able, to receive your copy as a pdf attachment to an email. This way, you can save us both expense and volunteer time. To do this please send an email to johnawhittle@aol.com from the email address you want us to use. Be sure to include your name so we can find you in our membership records!

What's That Bird at Your Suet Feeder?

It may be one of these hungry visitors.

Tufted Titmouse

Now, if your bird is tiny and almost all gray, with a small crest and a blot of black above its squat beak, a Tufted Titmouse has stopped by your suet. A familiar backyard bird in the eastern U.S., the Titmouse can also be identified by the rusty wash under its wings.

Carolina Wren

Hard to confuse this little brown bird with the others here, but **Carolina Wrens** will happily swing by a suet feeder. These chatty birds can be quickly identified by the bright white lines above their eyes, a slightly curved beak, and their upright tails, which they flick about as they busily hop around.

Downy Woodpecker

Woodpeckers are some of the most frequent suet guests, and the **Downy Woodpecker** is probably the most frequent. The smallest of the North American woodpeckers, it has black and white markings on its face, wings, and back. Males also have a bit of red on the back of their heads. Downy Woodpeckers are often confused with the larger Hairy Woodpecker.

Red-bellied Woodpecker

Because of its distinguishing bright red cap, the **Red-bellied Woodpecker** is sometimes confused with the Red-headed Woodpecker. But when compared side by side, they are very different looking birds. Red-heads are also not nearly as common. An abundant woodpecker in the eastern U.S., the Red-belly is a medium-size woodpecker. In addition to its red cap, it has a black-and-white striped back and a wash of red on its creamy-gray belly, which is how the bird got its name.

Northern Flicker

One of the more striking birds you'll see around your backyard, the **Northern Flicker** is a large woodpecker that often visits suet feeders. With their spotted breasts, striped backs, black bib, and a flash of yellow or red in the wings when they fly, they are stunning birds that look like nothing else hanging from your suet feeder.

Field Trip to Cattail Marsh – 20 January 2018

Approximately 25 members and friends assembled in the parking lot at Cattail Marsh in Tyrrell Park in Beaumont on a relatively mild morning with a light to moderate southeast wind. Cattail Marsh is without question the best birding location in Beaumont itself, and one of the best in the greater Golden Triangle area.

A 500 foot boardwalk built in 2016 out into the shallow water of the nearest cell of the wetland allows close views of the ducks and other waterfowl feeding and loafing in the shallow water, so the birders spent some time enjoying the views. Cattail Marsh was constructed in 1993 as the final stage of Beaumont's waste water treatment process. Water is pumped from the primary treatment facility across Hillebrandt Bayou into the northernmost cell (cell 1). This is the deepest cell, and thereafter water is channeled through one or more on the other cells and finally pumped across Willow Marsh Bayou into a natural wetland from which it percolates into Hillebrandt Bayou and thence to the Gulf of Mexico.

A walk round the outside of the 900 acre facility extends to about five miles. Including the interior levees, there are nearly nine miles of levees that allow access to all parts of the Marsh. But that is more than most of us want to walk! Our traditional field trip route is to head south first along the western edge of the cell just inside the gate (cell 2), and take the levee east along the south edge of the northern three cells. See map below. This route first goes alongside the wooded edge, still with marsh on the other side. In winter, the water birds predominate. Notable were Virginia Rails. There have always been Virginia Rails in the marsh side, but their secretive nature has almost always meant that hearing them call was all that was available. However, on this trip, some of our photographer members were able to get pictures. Other more prosaic species in the water included lots of Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal, American Coots and Common Gallinules. Cattail Marsh has become the place in Southeast Texas to find Cinnamon Teal. This striking species is closely related to the Blue-winged Teal, and replaces it in the western half of the lower 48-states. The maximum number anyone on the field trip recorded was five, but in recent months, anything up to 12 have been recorded in a day. Wading birds included the noisy Black-necked Stilts, Snowy Egrets, Tricolored Herons and both White and dark Ibis. Birds of the marsh vegetation included Swamp Sparrow and Marsh Wren as well as Common Yellowthroats. Woodland birds included the inevitable Yellow-rumped Warblers.

Turning along the southern edges of the first cell and continuing to cell 3 brought the group to the haunts of a

number of Least Grebes. Only one was visible on this occasion, although reports in the fall usually had larger numbers, including a number of juveniles. This species was formerly confined to the lower Rio Grande Valley and points further south, but over the last 20 or so years, it has become established much further north. The species is quite secretive, and it may be more widely distributed than is recognized, but nowhere has it been easier to find than at Cattail Marsh.

Another species that seems easier to find at Cattail than elsewhere is Glossy Ibis, and two were found along the southern edge of cell 3. Most dark ibis east of the Atchafalaya in Louisiana are Glossy Ibis, and most west of it are White-faced Ibis. However, in the mid-1990s, it became clear that there were a very few Glossy Ibis in coastal areas of eastern Texas. Recently, and perhaps somewhat belatedly, birders in Louisiana have recognized that there are small numbers of White-faced Ibis in eastern Louisiana, and more birders in Texas are finding clear cut Glossy Ibis in Texas (and by implication, in southwest Louisiana). It is not possible to distinguish between the species unless the bird has the facial skin pattern of the adult, or a red eye confirming White-faced Ibis. The scientifically valid practice is to record Glossy or White-faced Ibis only if the species can be closely observed and the bare skin allows identification to species. Unfortunately, the Christmas Bird Count and eBird policies call for defaulting the identification to the species that predominates in an area except in a very narrow zone of overlap. There is some hope that recent moves to expand the area in eastern Louisiana where defaulting should not be practiced will be followed by similar expansions in western Louisiana. To their credit, many birders in eastern Texas already record Glossy/White-faced Ibis if the birds cannot be confirmed as one or the other, and, of course, that will be the case in many instances. It perhaps should be stated that Glossy Ibis in eastern Texas are most often found as single birds, not as part of the large flocks of dark ibis that are common along the coastal marshes.

On last year's field trip, a very cooperative King Rail was found in that area along the north edge of cell 3, but efforts to coax one out this year were not successful, and the species went unrecorded this year. It has never been very common in Cattail, unlike Sora which are quite numerous and usually not quite as shy as other rails. The characteristic whinny call of the Sora is quintessential Cattail Marsh and at least six were recorded this year.

The next part of the route went down the grassy levee between cells 3 and 4, with its many Savannah Sparrows, enabling views of two northern cells that cannot be seen from the entrance area. These cells have

open water areas which held Gadwall, Northern Shovelers, Mallards and American Wigeon as well as more teal. Some Black-crowned Night-Herons in cell 3 were well hidden until a Northern Harrier flushed them. Many Turkey Vultures and a Red-tailed Hawk were visible in the distance. A Wilson's Snipe was also seen. The Least Grebe that has been along the north edge of cell 3 was not seen, and there was not a collection of shorebirds on this occasion.

On to cell 1, the deep water cell, which always has almost all of the diving ducks present. Lots of Ruddy Ducks as well as Ring-necked Ducks, Bufflehead and Lesser Scaup were seen.

The trees on the north side of cell 1 across Hillebrandt Bayou have in recent years had interesting winter birds. The pair of Bald Eagles moved their nesting site from the other side of Hillebrandt Bayou opposite cell 8 to its present location in the trees on the north side of the Drainage District 6 canal opposite cell 1 a couple of years back. One was sitting on the nest while the other perched in a nearby tree. We believe two chicks have hatched in the days since the field trip. The eagles have been the center of much attention, but the nest, which can be seen quite well from the northern perimeter of cell 1, is in a tree in an area that is essentially inaccessible.

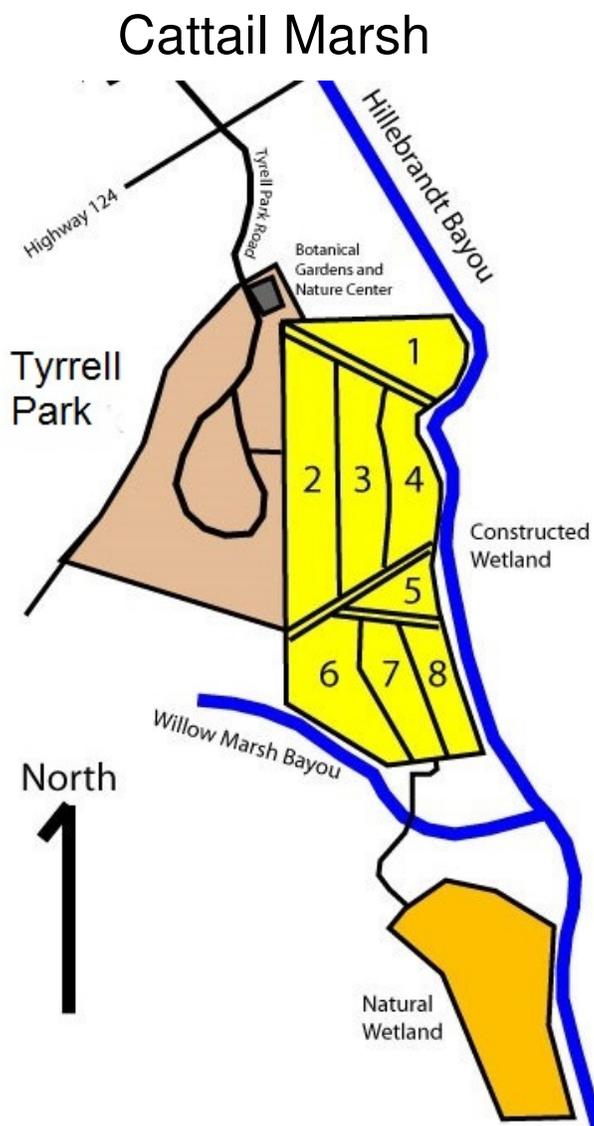
Another interesting winter resident of that same area of trees, although usually a discreet distance further west, is a western type Rufous morph Red-tailed Hawk. It has been present three out of the past four years. This rufous morph is not the Harlan's Hawk, but a dark morph of the Red-tailed. This morph has a distinctly red tail, unlike the Harlan's Hawk. The Red-tailed Hawk is one of the most variable of hawks, and intermediates of all shades are common, but all seem to freely interbreed.

The remainder of the loop route goes along the west side of cell 1 back to the starting point. A number of more woodland oriented birds were added to the trip list. These included Carolina Wren, Northern Cardinal, Blue Jay, and another common bird of Cattail Marsh, American Pipit.

Even the route taken round the northern cells is a long walk, but there is always some bird life to see. It does not explore the cells in the southern part of the Marsh, but the northern cells usually hold more of the interesting birds.

Species List: Blue-winged Teal (200); Cinnamon Teal (5); Northern Shoveler (140); Gadwall (12); American Wigeon (17); Mallard (24); Mottled Duck (2); Northern Pintail (25); Green-winged Teal (100); Ring-necked Duck (11); Lesser Scaup (14); Bufflehead (6); Ruddy Duck (100); Least Grebe (1); Pied-billed Grebe (6); Double-crested Cormorant (8) sp. (4); American White Pelican (1); Great Blue Heron (2); Great Egret (6); Snowy Egret (9); Little Blue Heron (2); Tricolored

Heron (4); Black-crowned Night-Heron (26); White Ibis (35); Glossy Ibis (2); White-faced Ibis (15); Glossy/White-faced Ibis (55); Roseate Spoonbill (1); Black Vulture (2); Turkey Vulture (55); Northern Harrier (3); Bald Eagle (2); Red-tailed Hawk (3); Virginia Rail (6); Sora (6); Common Gallinule (29); American Coot (48); Black-necked Stilt (9); American Avocet (16); Killdeer (3); Wilson's Snipe (2); Laughing Gull (150); Ring-billed Gull (250); Red-bellied Woodpecker (1); Eastern Phoebe (5); Loggerhead Shrike (1); Blue Jay (3); Tree Swallow (56); Marsh Wren (3); Carolina Wren (1); American Robin (1); Northern Mockingbird (2); American Pipit (2); Orange-crowned Warbler (4); Common Yellowthroat (6); Palm Warbler (2 western); White-throated Sparrow (1); Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler (6); White-throated Sparrow (1); Savannah Sparrow (25); Song Sparrow (3); Swamp Sparrow (20); Northern Cardinal (2); Red-winged Blackbird (40); Boat-tailed Grackle (4); Great-tailed Grackle (15); 64 species.



Compiled by the editor from reports by Sheila Hebert, and the eBird reports by Michael Cooper, John Haynes, Thomas Hellweg, Phillip Hight, Gary Kelley, and Harlan Stewart,

Bird Sightings – January 2018

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 records for Chambers, Galveston, Harris and Liberty Counties in Texas, and Calcasieu and Cameron Parishes in Louisiana.

The format of the listing is Species – Date – County-and brief location information if available – (number) – Observer(s). If more precise location information is needed, it can often be obtained by using the bird species map feature to find the sighting in eBird, opening the checklist, and using the map function to display the location as precisely as the observer provided.

Seen in our Core Counties (listed above)

Surf Scoter	Jan 6-10	JEF-Pleasure Is N levee (1) MC et al (male)
Long-tailed Duck	Jan 6-10	JEF-Pleasure Is N levee (2) JHH et al (male+fem)
Red-throated Loon	Jan 7	ANG and SAA both on Hwy 147 Causeway (1) Steve Glover, Greg Cook
Least Grebe	Jan 2-28	JEF-TP (up to 3) MC, SH, TH, JHH
Tricolored Heron	Jan 3	JAS-Martin Dies SP (1) Jan Allen
Glossy Ibis	Jan 5-20	JEF-Cattail Marsh (1-2) mult. obs.
White-tailed Hawk	Jan 4	JEF-Todd Rd (1) JAW (adult)
	Jan 13	JEF-WJC (1) MC, TH
	Jan 18	JEF-Big Hill Rd (1) JHH
American Woodcock	Jan 3-7	JEF-SW (1) JHH, MC, Ron Weeks
Chuck-will's-Widow	Jan 7-15	JEF-SW (1) Ron Weeks, Gary Binderim, JHH
Crested Caracara	Jan 13	HAI-Old Sour Lk Rd (1) MC, TH, Gary Binderim
Vermilion Flycatcher	Jan 5-13	HAI-Old Sour Lake Rd (1) JAW, TH, MC, Gary Binderim (fem)
	Jan 7	SAA-TX147 Causeway (1) Greg Cook
Great Kiskadee	Jan 3	JEF-SW (1) JHH et al
Eastern Kingbird	Jan 14	HAI-Silsbee (1) Jana Winberg
Tree Swallow	Jan 3	JAS-Martin Dies SP (5) Jan Allen
	Jan 12	ANG-Kurth Lake (3) Justin Bosler
Cave Swallow	Jan 12-14	ANG-Kurth Lake (up to 150) Justin Bosler, Bonnie McKenzie
Black-and-white Warbler	Jan 19	JAS-Martin Dies SP-Island trl (1) Jeremy Webster
Fox Sparrow	Jan 3-9	JEF-SW (1) JHH, Ashley Fuselier, MC, Gary Binderim
Summer Tanager	Jan 23-28	JEF-Sabine Woods (1) Howard Davis
Rusty Blackbird	Jan 3-5	HAI-Old Sour Lake Rd (60) JM et al
Baltimore Oriole	Jan 3	JEF-Hwy 124 2 mile NE of Fannett (1) Ken Blankenship

Nearby Counties (very rare species only)

Fulvous Whistling-Duck	Jan 4	CAM-Cameron Prairie NWR (2) Erik Hendrickson
Cackling Goose	Jan 10	CAM-Lacassine NWR Pool Unit (1) Robert Martinez
Cinnamon Teal	Jan 6-31	CAM-Cameron Prairie NWR (2) Randy Frederick, Erik Johnson et al
Surf Scoter	Jan 2	CHA-Baytown HL&P Cooling Pond (1) David Hanson, Ron Weeks, David Sarkozi
White-winged Scoter	Jan 20	CAM-Holly Beach (4) Cathy DiSalvo
Black Scoter	Jan 15	CAM-Holly Beach –inland (1) Jay Huner
	Jan 27-31	HAS -Maramar Park area S of La Porte (1) B. Lirette, D. Hanson, T.

Wood Stork	Jan 12	Frank, R. Weeks, C. Davis (also in CHA waters at times)
Least Bittern	Jan 2-14	HAS-Addicks Res. S Levee (1) Jeff Pippen
	Jan 3	CAM-Cameron Prairie NWR (1) Anne and Christine Jacobs, Stephen Falick
	Jan 5	CHA-ANWR Shoveler Pond (1) Matthew Sim
	Jan 5	CAM-Muria Rd (1) Kimberly Lanka et al
Glossy Ibis	Jan 21	CHA-ANWR (1) David Sarkozi
Harris's Hawk	Jan 1-9	GAL-Smith Oaks (1) Conor McMahon
White-tailed Kite	Jan 12	CAL-nr. Iowa (1) John Ball
	Jan 22-28	CAL-Fed Vail Road (1) Deborah Frank
White-tailed Hawk	Jan 11	CAL-Harris at Fruge Rds (1) Jay Huner
Swainson's Hawk	Jan 5	CAM-Hwy 82 East (1) Paul Conover, Mark Meunier
Yellow Rail	Jan 5	CAM-Broussard Beach (8) Banding Party
	Jan 11	HAS-El Franco Lee Pk (2) Christine Jacobs
Whooping Crane	Jan 4	CHA-Beach City (6) Shari Lippe (unconfirmed)
Semipalmat. Sandpiper	Jan 5	GAL-Bolivar Flats North Jetty (1) Brendan Murtha, Caleb Frome (unconfirmed)
Parasitic Jaeger	Jan 15-16	GAS-Texas City Dike (1) Dennis Shepler et al
Black-legged Kittiwake	Jan 4-25	HAS-La Porte (1) Cin-Ty Lee et al; also in Chambers County waters at times
Little Gull	Jan 16	GAL-Texas City Dike (1) Richard Liebler et al
Iceland Gull (Thayer's)	Jan 2	GAL-Texas City Dike (1) Dennis Cooke, James Rieman
Caspian Tern	Jan 1	LIB-Texaco Rd (1) Brian Berry
Common Ground-Dove	Jan 6	CAM-Willow Is (1) David Muth, Joan Garvey (heard only)\t
Anna's Hummingbird	Jan 16	HAS-east of Cypress (1) Sarah and Michael Kuzio (imm male)
Ladder-back. Woodprk	Jan 13	GAL-Lafitte's Cove (1) Ed Allday
Greater Pewee	Jan 3-29	HAS-Bear Creek Park, Bathroom #9 area (1) Chris Hammond et al
Brown-crest. Flycatcher	Jan 23	CHA-Turtle Bayou Nature Preserve (1) Shelli Ellerbe (IDd by call note)
Great Kiskadee	Jan 5	GAL-San Leon (1) Brian Berry
Couch's Kingbird	Jan 2	CHA-Anahuac Pumping Station (1) Marie Asscherick
	Jan 6-19	CAL-Rossignol Rd (1) multiple obs
Fish Crow	Jan 26	CHA-Trinity Riv. Isl. Rec Area (1) Jeff Pippen
White-breasted Nuthatch	Jan 9	HAS- Timberlake Village area (1) Megan Ahlgren

	Jan 10-11	HAS-Kingwood (1) Bonnie de Grood	Henslow's Sparrow	Jan 4	HAS-Ash Lake (1) Cin-Ty Lee
	Jan 21	HAS-Spring Creek Park (1) Greg Page	Clay-colored Sparrow	Jan 6-21	CAM-Willow Is (1) multiple obs
American Crow	Jan 5	CAM-Rutherford Beach Rd (1) Delaina LeBlanc, Jessica Schulz	Harris's Sparrow	Jan 6-11	CAM-Willow Is (2) multiple obs
Wood Thrush	Jan 5	CAM-Little Chenier Rd (1) Kimberly Lanka, Marybeth Lima, Erik Johnson	Western Tanager	Jan 8	HAS-Timberlake Village area (1) Megan Ahlgren
Northern Waterthrush	Jan 7	CHA-Anahuac Pumping Station (1) Ron Weeks		Jan 14-28	HAS-Baer Creek Pk near Rest Room #9 (1) Colby Ayers et al
Black-and-white Warbler	Jan 21	CAM-Willow Island (1) Paul conover, Phillip Wallace	Painted Bunting	Jan 13	CAL-nr. Golden Nugget (1) Gary Broussard (fem)
Nashville Warbler	Jan 15-28	LIB-FM1008 5 mi N of Kenefick (1) Colette MiCallef, Carlton Collier		Jan 14	HAS-Robt. C. Stuart Park (1) Ron Weeks, Erik Sauder
	Jan 17	HAS-northeast Cypress (1) Jill LcGowan		Jan 14	CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Allen and Chantal Correll
Cape May Warbler	Jan 15-16	GAL-Kempner Pk (1) Lisa Velasquez, Dianne Baughman	Yellow-headed Blackbird	Jan 18-19	CHA-Oyster Bayou Hunting Club (1) Gene Campbell (male)
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	Jan 28-30	HAS-nr. Clay@Barker Cypress (1) Timothy White (male)		Jan 5	CAM-Creole (1) Donald Norman
Yellow-throated Warbler	Jan 4	HAS-Shephard Dr (1) John O'Brien		Jan 20-21	CHA-FM1985 incl Skillern Tract of ANWR (up to 50) Cynthia and Robert Danielson, John Marianai et al
	Jan 6	HAS-Baer Creek Pk (1) Greg Page	Bullock's Oriole	Jan 9-30	HAS-Robt C Stuart Park (1) James Rieman et al
	Jan 6-21	CAM-Willow Is (1) David Muth, Joan Garvey, Mark Meunier et al		Jan 10-11	HAS-Baytown (1) Gene Campbell et al
Prairie Warbler	Jan 20	HAS-Sping (1) John Black	Abbreviations used: ANG – Angelina County; 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; HAS – Harris County; HS – Harlan Stewart; JAS – Jasper County; 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; SAA – San Augustine Co.; 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 Co..		
	Jan 14	GAL-Friendswood (1) Jodi Henricks			
Black-thr. Gray Warbler	Jan 1-15	GAL-Kempner Park (1) multiple obs.			
	Jan 7-13	HAS-Hogg Park (1) Wendy Wright			
Black thr. Green Warbler	Jan 4	HAS-Towne Lake (1) Greg Page			
	Jan 30	HAS-River Oaks Pk (1) Tira Overstreet			
Grasshopper Sparrow	Jan 6-8	CAM-Willow Is (1) multiple obs			

Commentary

Coupled with an expansion of the area covered by this section, we are instituting a regular "blog" with comments on some of the sightings of rare birds and highlighting some bird observations not qualifying for inclusion as rare species. These will include observations of exceptional numbers of some species, and also noteworthy concentrations at some local hotspots. The expansion of the coverage area includes inclusion of sightings at some heavily birded hotspots in the Houston area, and also an eastward expansion of the area covered in southwest Louisiana. Southwest Louisiana, especially Cameron Parish, has been much more intensively birded this winter. This has always been a birdy area, but the famous Patagonia Picnic Table Effect has been very evident this season, and discovery of one rare bird has led to other rare species being found nearby. In this case, many of the noteworthy species have been

For those not familiar, the effect was named after a roadside rest area on Arizona Hwy 82 four miles southwest of Patagonia. In the early 1970s, a pair of Rose-throated Becards were found regularly nesting at the site. Birders coming to look for the Becards found other species, most notably Thick-billed Kingbirds. (The Becards eventually moved on, but Thick-billed Kingbirds have become quite common at the site and nearby.)

In the southwest Louisiana case, several of the noteworthy species have been species recently that expanded into southeast Texas further expanding their range eastwards.

White-tailed Kite, White-tailed Hawk and Crested Caracara are the most obvious of these. Cinnamon Teal at Cameron Prairie NWR possibly fall into the same category.

A further example of the Patagonia Picnic Table Effect occurred in southeast Texas early in January. The sighting of up to 17 Common Goldeneyes in Sabine Lake offshore from the South Levee of Pleasure Island on January 4-5 led to multiple birder visits to Pleasure Island in the days that followed. Large numbers of Common Loons were also seen. Birders checking the base of the North Levee on January 6 after viewing the goldeneyes and loons found a nice male Surf Scoter fairly close to the levee. While watching the scoter, two Long-tailed Ducks suddenly came into view!

Late in December, Harlan Stewart found and photographed a Cattle Egret in Tyrrell Park that has extensive blue coloration, especially on its upper wings. The blue markings do not fit a bird deliberately dyed for scientific purposes, and an internet search did not uncover any other reports. However, there is a report from South Africa in January 2015 of a very similar blue Cattle Egret. It is apparently an exceptionally rare aberrant plumage. The Cattail Marsh bird has been in a group of 250 to 300 Cattle Egrets that come in late in the afternoon (4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.) to roost in an area out from the end of the boardwalk. That group of Cattle Egrets is an exceptionally large group for the time of year. Normally wintering Cattle Egrets are seen as individual birds or in small groups up to no more than 10 birds.

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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 forms of 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.

Detailed information/maps on birding sites in Texas is available on the Web at <http://www.texasbirds.org/birdingLocations.php>. This leads you to the maps of the various eBird hotspots. You can also subscribe (free) on eBird for email alerts for all rare birds reported in a specific county.