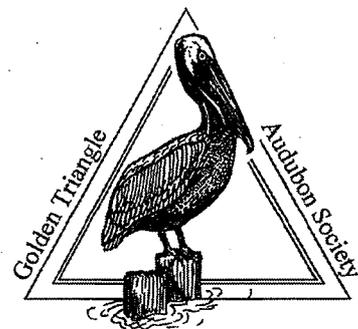


# The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 24 No. 3

March 2018

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

**Bosque del Apache  
Dana Nelson**

Dana Nelson, using his own photographs and some by James Saxon, will take us on a photographic tour of the birds and other wildlife of Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, located in southern New Mexico about 80 miles south of Albuquerque and 10 miles south of Socorro. The name of the refuge means "woods of the Apache" in Spanish, named for the Apache tribes that once camped in the forests along the Rio Grande. The heart of the refuge comprises approximately 3,800 acres of Rio Grande floodplain and 9,100 acres of irrigated farms and wetlands. In addition to this, the refuge contains 44,300 acres of arid grasslands and foothills. A twelve-mile-long loop road allows automobile drivers excellent views of wetland wildlife and raptors, affords good views of the fields where crops are grown for the benefit of the birds under cooperative agreements with farmers.

About 7,000 acres in the center of the refuge are made up of flood-plains watered by irrigation systems connected to the Rio Grande. These flood-plains provide an essential habitat for cottonwood and honey mesquite trees, coyote willows, and four-wing saltbushes. There are also several areas of dry land, including scrubland and desert terrain that is connected to the Chihuahuan desert.

There have been 358 different bird species observed in the refuge since 1981. From late November to late February, the wetlands attract the huge flocks of wintering Sandhill Cranes (over 10,000) and geese (20,000) that are the refuge's most interesting feature. Many other species—notably waterfowl, shorebirds, and birds of prey—winter in the refuge. The diversity of birds is also high in spring, particularly the last week of April and first week of May, and in fall.

We will plan on having the doors open by 6:00 p.m. and the program will start at 7:00 p.m. sharp. Sandwiches for this meeting, available from 6:15 p.m., are being provided by Port Arthur convention and Visitors Bureau.

## *The Brown Pelican*

Vol. 24, No.3 March 2018  
Issue number 248

### Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Web Site for more information  
[www.goldentriangleaudubon.org](http://www.goldentriangleaudubon.org)

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

**Thursday March 15, 2018. Membership Meeting.** Bosque del Apache by Dana Nelson. See p.1

#### **Directions to Tyrrell Park From the South**

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

Take Texas 124 (south or west, whichever it is signed) towards Fannett (left turn under the highway).

Travel about 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 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 a long 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.



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

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

**Saturday April 21, 2018. Field Trip to Sabine Woods.** This trip will look for Neotropical migrants at the height of spring migration. We will assemble at Sabine Woods at 7:30 a.m. (You should be able to find the group if you are unable to be there quite that early.)

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

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

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

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

**Saturday May 12, 2018. North American Migration Count.** On International Migratory Bird Day, we undertake an all-Jefferson-County Bird Count. We have been doing these counts since 1995. The count attempts to cover as much of Jefferson County as is reasonably possible. We welcome all participants, especially if you are able to count in the early morning from

dawn through about 11:00 a.m. It is not necessary to commit to the whole day. If you have special access to any areas within the county, we would appreciate your help! Contact John Whittle (johnawhittle@aol.com or 409-722-4193) for details or offers to help.

## 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 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.

As a reminder, dues are voluntary for National Audubon Society (NAS) members living in the Chapter's official territory, which is defined by zip codes, but basically covers all of Jefferson, Orange and Hardin Counties and one or two zip codes adjacent to these counties. 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!

## Commentary on Bird Sightings (page 7)

This month's listings contain an unusually large number of species normally wintering further south. Seven warbler species are included in this category. The appearance of Chuck-will's-widow, Common Nighthawk, and Eastern Whip-poor-will is noteworthy. The Harris's Hawk (north of its usual range) and the Swainson's Hawk (normally winters in Argentina!) are also interesting. Several other sightings are of continuing birds.

With the changes we instituted in the Bird Sightings section, the number of sightings has increased noticeably. The report of February sightings, a month that is traditionally thought of as not producing many rarities has almost over-filled a page. Most years, fewer of the species normally wintering further south are still around in February, and it is really too early for any "early" migrants to show up.

To explain our new processes a little further, our first "cut" is to consider for inclusion all those that are marked on eBird as "rare." In eBird, species can only be marked as rare in a whole county for any given week in the year. Jefferson County is not only the focus of a lot of the local birding, but is the local County with the most varied habitat from south to north. Many species that would be very rare on the coast, at Sabine Woods for example, may not deserve that status in the wooded areas in the extreme northeast of the county, and *vice versa*. We do try to take account of these very local differences when we can. More easily selected for inclusion are species that are common enough in Jefferson County, but rare a little further north – Hardin, Tyler, Newton, Jasper, Liberty and Calcasieu Parish – and, again, *vice versa*. Some of the counties to our north are not birded nearly as intensively birded, and the eBird filters may need adjustment, and we do select ourselves. Also, in Louisiana, some species are tagged as rare because the reviewer wants to look at some sightings that may present identification difficulties. This is valuable to some extent, but we do not include sightings that turn out not to be of rare species.

# More than 500 Organizations in All 50 States Urge Congress to Defend Bird Protection Law

## Threats in Congress and the Department of the Interior weaken century-old Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

By National Audubon Society  
February 08, 2018

WASHINGTON — More than 500 conservation groups and other organizations from all 50 states joined together today to urge Congress to defend the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the most important bird conservation policy in the United States. The Act, which has protected North American birds for 100 years, is currently under attack by both the Department of the Interior and Congress, led by Rep. Liz Cheney (R-WY).

"Killing birds is a poison policy for Congress and the Department of the Interior. Americans in all 50 states are rising up to support 100 years of bipartisan agreement to protect America's birds from avoidable deaths," said David Yarnold (@david\_yarnold), president and CEO of the National Audubon Society.

"Under either Rep. Liz Cheney's proposal or the Interior Department's legal opinion, BP would have been completely off the hook for the one million birds that died in the Gulf after the Deepwater Horizon spill. Common sense says no one really wants that, and organizations representing millions of people are asking Congress to listen."

In November, Rep. Cheney introduced a measure to gut the MBTA as an amendment to H.R. 4239, a bill written to weaken environmental protections in order to facilitate oil and gas drilling. Three days before Christmas, the administration followed suit when the Office of the Solicitor within the Department of the Interior released an opinion saying it will no longer enforce the MBTA in cases of incidental bird deaths, effectively giving a blank check to industry to avoid gruesome and preventable bird deaths.

The MBTA is one of the Audubon Society and the American conservation movement's earliest victories, and has protected millions if not billions of birds in its century-long history. Congress passed the MBTA in 1918 in response to public outcry over the mass slaughter of birds, which threatened egrets and other species with extinction. The law prohibits killing or harming America's birds except under certain conditions, including managed hunting seasons for game species. Today, this law protects birds from 21st-century threats by bringing together industry, government and conservation organizations to implement best-management practices. Commonsense solutions like covering oil pits and flagging transmission lines protect countless birds each year from otherwise needless deaths.

Today's letter shows that organizations and their members from across the country want to see this Congress build on our nation's 100-year conservation ethic, which brought into being laws like the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Endangered Species Act and the establishment of our national parks. These groups ask our elected officials to rightly reject misguided efforts and false narratives that pit conservation against economic development.

### Facts and figures on industrial causes of bird mortality in the United States:

- Power lines: Up to 64 million birds per year (Source: <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0101565>)
- Communication towers: Up to 7 million birds per year (Source: <http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0034025>)
- Oil waste pits: 500,000 to 1 million birds per year (Source: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16988870>)
- Oil spills: The 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill is estimated to have killed more than 1 million birds (<http://www.audubon.org/news/more-one-million-birds-died-during-deepwater-horizon-disaster>)

### Additional quotes from major conservation groups:

"Some companies put strong conservation practices in place without needing legal incentives," said Steve Holmer, vice president of policy at American Bird Conservancy. "But having the law in place encourages all companies to do the right thing. These changes to MBTA would take the teeth out of the only law that protects the majority of our native birds."

"For a century, the United States alongside Canada and other nations have committed to protect migratory birds," said Bob Dreher, senior vice president for conservation programs at Defenders of Wildlife. "Now, on the 100th anniversary of the MBTA, Congress and the Trump administration are renegeing on this promise. Birds connect every American to nature, and are a source of joy and beauty for millions of people every day, but these attacks seek to undermine our nation's strongest law to protect them."

"The latest giveaway to oil and gas interests: birds. Or at least one of the oldest and most important laws on the books for birds. Rolling back the MBTA gives industry a pass on common-sense actions that should be taken to protect birds and other wildlife. This action doesn't just back step on our nation's storied conservation legacy, it also represents one more example of the Trump administration stepping away from our international commitments to protect the environment," said Katie Umekubo, senior attorney for the Nature Program at Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC).

**Contacts:** Nicolas Gonzalez, National Audubon Society, [ngonzalez@audubon.org](mailto:ngonzalez@audubon.org), (212) 979-3100.

Steve Holmer, American Bird Conservancy, [sholmer@abcbirds.org](mailto:sholmer@abcbirds.org), (202) 888-7490.

Gwen Dobbs, Defenders of Wildlife, [gdobbs@defenders.org](mailto:gdobbs@defenders.org), (202) 772-0269.

Kari Birdseye, Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), [kbirdseye@nrdc.org](mailto:kbirdseye@nrdc.org), (415) 875-8243.

## Field Trip to The Hawk Club – 03 February 2018

Our regular field trip schedule covers many of the well known public birding sites in the area, but there are other places with good birding possibilities. So when Carl Grimmett of the Hawk Club graciously invited us for a field trip to their private property southeast of Bridge City, we scheduled an extra trip. The Hawk Club owns 4,000 acres stretching from the southern part of Lakeshore Farm Road down to the Sabine River, and from Cow Bayou on the east almost to the eastern boundary of the Old River Unit of the Lower Neches Wildlife Management Area on the west. There are many ponds/moist soil units, mostly surrounded by levees and with water control structures, as well as several nice small wooded areas.

Despite not having scheduled this trip in time for our full normal notifications in the *Brown Pelican*, ten members met on a distinctly chilly (for south-east Texas) morning, with occasional short periods of mostly light rain. We drove south to the Hawk Club property and on to the maintenance area, where Carl and his wife were waiting with hot coffee and coffee cake. After introductions and some orientation, we consolidated into three high clearance vehicles and proceeded to the business of the day – birding.

On the way in, some members of the group had already seen Crested Caracara, both vulture species, a White-crowned Sparrow and a Gray Catbird. A White-tailed Kite perched on trees near the maintenance area all day, while some American Robins and two Cedar Waxwings were also noted. We first proceeded to the high observation platform for a better view of the extent of this beautiful property. Both Brown and American White Pelicans could be seen down near the river, as well as a pair of rather retiring Pied-billed Grebes, and at least one Neotropic and one Double-crested Cormorant. Great Blue Herons, White and dark ibis were around everywhere we went during the trip.

We then proceeded round a few of the nearby ponds. Duck season had ended the prior weekend, but the ducks were still suspicious and took flight rather easily. Northern Pintail populations have now recovered from lows of a few years back, and there were good numbers in the ponds. There were, as usual, lots of Northern Shovelers in the shallower areas, and three Mallards (two males and a female) also got up. Smaller ducks were represented by a modest flock of Green-winged Teal, as well as two Blue-winged Teal. Larger birds were represented by about 30 Greater White-fronted Geese on the surface, and about 18 Snow/Ross's Geese flying somewhat distantly. But the neatest sight was an adult Bald Eagle apparently being escorted out the area by a Crested Caracara, which trailed behind and above it! The only itinerant shorebirds were in a flock of five dowitchers and nine Dunlin that flew by, but there were Killdeer in a number of places. There were some American Coots, but far fewer than would be present in other local water bird areas of similar size. About six Tree Swallows were seen flying low over the ponds, but later, we saw from the road to Bailey's hundreds flying low over the water in Old River Cove.

The wooded areas that line one or both edges of many of the interior roads held many of the birds to be expected in

winter in southeast Texas. An American Kestrel temporarily displaced the White-tailed Kite. The first of several Eastern Phoebes was flycatching from somewhat lower perches. Northern Cardinals were calling from several areas. A noisy flock of American Robins moved from one area to another all day. Swamp Sparrows could be heard calling and occasionally seen. Savannah Sparrows, were as always in the area in winter, numerous in the more open edges. Two Song Sparrows were identified, and two Red-bellied Woodpeckers announced their presence. A perched falcon was identified as a Merlin. One Brown Thrasher was noted, and a Red-tailed Hawk flew by. Another flock of Greater White-fronted Geese was seen.

A nice trail lined with lots of yaupon trees and other bushes leads east to one of the loops of Cow Bayou. There, we briefly saw one Eastern Towhee and heard another. We also located the inevitable Ruby-crowned Kinglet as well as a few Orange-crowned Warblers and a much larger number of Yellow-rumped Warblers. A few Northern Mockingbirds were around, as well as two Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. Three White-throated Sparrows, and an American Goldfinch were added to the growing list.

Continuing on past a pond from which four Mallards, four Northern Shoveler, and five Green-winged Teal flushed, we heard the unmistakable call of a White-eyed Vireo. Some trees in the medium distance served as the perches for about 50 more American Robins, and about 50 Cedar Waxwings. A swampy area produced Swamp Sparrow, Song Sparrow and at least four Lincoln's Sparrow, as well as another Gray Catbird.

As we headed back for a lunch break, a large dark raptor perched on the top of a tree was identified as an immature Bald Eagle. The limited amount of white on this bird suggested a one or two year old bird.

After lunch, we set out to view more ponds. We did see find two yellowlegs and some Eastern Meadowlarks. The ducks seen were almost all Northern Shovelers, but we did also hear a Downy Woodpeckers, and saw yet another Gray Catbird. However, the rain became a little more persistent, and just before 3 p.m., we called it a day. We sincerely thank the Hawk Club, and especially Carl Grimmett and his wife, for their hospitality and for making this trip possible.

Species seen: Snow Goose (18); Greater White-fronted Goose (54); Blue-winged Teal (2); Northern Shoveler (29); Mallard (7); Northern Pintail (50); Green-winged Teal (29); Pied-billed Grebe (3); Neotropic Cormorant (1); Double-crested Cormorant (1); cormorant sp. (5); American White Pelican (25); Brown Pelican (8); Great Blue Heron (4); Great Egret (1); White Ibis (7); Glossy/White-faced Ibis (194); Turkey Vulture (5); Black Vulture (2); White-tailed Kite (1); Northern Harrier (1); Bald Eagle (2 one ad, one imm); Red-tailed Hawk (3); American Coot (8); Killdeer (12); Dunlin (9); Short-billed/Long-billed Dowitcher (5); Greater/Lesser Yellowlegs (2); Mourning Dove (6); Red-bellied Woodpecker (2); Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (2); Downy Woodpecker (1 heard only); Crested Caracara (2); American Kestrel (1); Merlin (1); Eastern Phoebe (4); White-eyed Vireo (1); Tree Swallow (6); Carolina Wren (1 heard only); Ruby-crowned Kinglet (4); Gray Catbird (3); American Robin (91); Brown Thrasher (1); Northern Mockingbird (4); Cedar Waxwing (52); Orange-crowned Warbler (4); Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle) (22); White-crowned Sparrow (1); White-throated Sparrow (3); Savannah Sparrow (6); Song Sparrow (3); Lincoln's Sparrow (4); Swamp Sparrow (4); Eastern Towhee (2); Northern Cardinal (2); Eastern Meadowlark (5); Red-winged Blackbird (5); American Goldfinch (1); 52 species.

John A. Whittle

# Field Trip to Anahuac NWR – 17 February 2018

Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge is a world-renowned waterfowl wintering site, and our field trip there is always a highlight of our year. It is a large refuge, and our trip is typically only able to sample a few of the best locations within it. We have learned to disregard forecasts of a 50 percent chance of rain, and it was after dark on this day before there was any significant rain around. The day did start with some quite thick fog, thick enough to hinder the photographers, but it burned off within an hour to reveal a pleasantly warm day. A total of 22 members and friends, from as far away as Shreveport (!), participated.

As the group assembled in the Visitor Information Station (VIS) area of what is called "Old Anahuac" (because it was one of the first parts to be incorporated into the refuge), discussion focused on birds seen on the drive in. There were two groups each of at least 1000 white geese (Snows and Ross's) in the fields along FM1985, with a few Greater White-fronted Geese mixed in. Several members reported seeing a White-tailed Hawk, a relatively rare, but definitely increasing Buteo. Near the VIS, there were already interesting birds. A Say's Phoebe that has been in that immediate area for a few weeks at least was flycatching in the maintenance area, safely behind locked gates. Looking back along the entrance road and the utility poles produced a White-tailed Kite and two Crested Caracaras

First the group walked the Willows Trail, and as expected, this produced a number of sparrow species: Song, Lincoln's and White-crowned, as well as a Ruby-crowned Kinglet and some Yellow-rumped Warblers, while we heard the first of several Common Yellowthroats. We concluded that a perched hawk was a Red-shouldered, a little out of place away from more mature woods. Keeping an eye on the sky added Roseate Spoonbill, White Ibis and Northern Harrier.

Next on the agenda was a survey of the "White-front Moist Soil Unit," a large field just south of the VIS. As a result of recent rains, there was much standing water, and eight species of ducks were identified: Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, both Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, a surprising number of American Wigeon, Gadwall, Mallard and Mottled Duck. As expected, there were some White Ibis, and one or two dark Ibis as well as American Coots and some Common Gallinule. Shorebirds included Greater Yellowlegs. Long-billed Dowitcher, a few Willets and the inevitable and very noisy Killdeer.

Shoveler Pond is perhaps the most famous birding location in the refuge. The several freezes earlier in the winter had reduced the amount of vegetation in the pond, increasing the open water and visibility. We spent nearly two hours at Shoveler, not only checking the water, but scanning the skies for overhead birds. The lead party became suspicious of a distant raptor, and as it slowly circled nearer, it was confirmed as an immature Bald Eagle. Eagles often attend the large goose flocks and this one was headed south into the heart of that part of the refuge, where, far from any roads open to the public, a large flock of white geese could be heard, and a few of them almost visible on the horizon. One of the parties further back in our caravan, not to be outdone, spotted an adult White-tailed Hawk circling to the north. On the water,

scattered everywhere there were the inevitable American Coots, albeit significantly reduced in numbers from those a few weeks prior, while the most numerous duck apart from Northern Shovelers was Ring-necked Duck. Along the west edge, we were happy to locate two male and one female Cinnamon Teal. Cinnamon Teal used to be very rare along the Upper Texas Coast, but have become increasingly common in recent years, and are also being seen in extreme southwestern Louisiana. Three female Buffleheads were in a deeper part of Shoveler Pond. Among the passerines, there were large numbers of Yellow-rumped Warblers in the phragmites, and one or two Marsh Wrens could be heard singing

After a break for lunch, most of the group headed back up the entrance road, and east along FM1985, stopping at wet fields to check the shorebirds, and admire the geese and ibis in several fields. The destination was the Skillern Tract, which extends on both sides of East Bay Bayou. The trail through the streamside vegetation usually produces a variety of passerine species, but on this day was strangely quiet. The observation platform was put to good use to support tripods for telescopes which enabled scrutiny of pond area about 500 yards south of it. With some difficulty, another male Cinnamon Teal was identified, as well as a number of Black-crowned Night-Herons. Some ducks were also visible – no additional species – as well as a nice group of Roseate Spoonbills. The finale of the trip was a stop along FM1985 to view another Say's Phoebe, like the first, known to have been around for a while, but a nice finish nonetheless.

This species list covers only birds seen starting with the assembly in the morning and finishing at the end of the visit to the Skillern Tract, and only includes birds seen by or notified to the leaders. Undoubtedly, a few other species were seen by participants, on the trip itself or in the vicinity en route to or from the trip. Because participants and the birds were widely spread out at times, we have not made any attempt even to estimate the numbers of each species seen. Snow Goose; Ross's Goose; Greater White-fronted Goose; Blue-winged Teal; Cinnamon Teal; Northern Shoveler; Gadwall; American Wigeon; Mallard; Mottled Duck; Northern Pintail; Green-winged Teal; Ring-necked Duck; Bufflehead; Pied-billed Grebe; Neotropic Cormorant; American White Pelican; Brown Pelican; Great Blue Heron; Great Egret; Snowy Egret; Little Blue Heron; Black-crowned Night-Heron; White Ibis; Glossy/White-faced Ibis; Roseate Spoonbill; Black Vulture; Turkey Vulture; Osprey; White-tailed Kite; Northern Harrier; Bald Eagle; White-tailed Hawk; Red-tailed Hawk; Common Gallinule; American Coot; Black-necked Stilt; Killdeer; Long-billed Dowitcher; Wilson's Snipe; Greater Yellowlegs; Willet; Lesser Yellowlegs; Mourning Dove; Belted Kingfisher; Crested Caracara; American Kestrel; Eastern Phoebe; Say's Phoebe; Loggerhead Shrike; Blue Jay; Tree Swallow; Marsh Wren; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Northern Mockingbird; European Starling; Common Yellowthroat; Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle); White-crowned Sparrow; Savannah Sparrow; Song Sparrow; Lincoln's Sparrow; Northern Cardinal; Eastern Meadowlark; Red-winged Blackbird; Boat-tailed Grackle; Great-tailed Grackle; 71 species.

*John A. Whittle*

## Bird Sightings – February 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)

Fulvous Whistling-Duck	Feb 18	JEF-Hwy 73 nr PA Landfill (35) Gary Kelley
Least Grebe	Feb 18	JEF-Cattail Marsh (1) Harlan Stewart (cell 3 N. end
California Gull	Feb 3-5	JEF-Sea Rim SP (1 adult) MC, TH, JHH (cont bird from last mo.)
Chuck-will's-widow	Feb 23	JEF-SW (1) Howard Davis
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	Feb 18	HAI-FM418 nr Kountze (1) Barbara Riley (wintering imm m)
Crested Caracara	Feb 2	HAI-Old Sour Lake Rd (1) J & L Bryan, JM continuing bird, (rare in Hardin County)
Yellow-thr. Warbler	Feb 18	JEF-SW (1) Howard Davis, Craig Geoffrey
Rusty Blackbird	Feb 18	JEF-Thompson Road (1) SH

### Nearby Counties

Fulvous Whistling-Duck	Feb 24	LIB-TX146 1/2 mile N of Chambers County Line (1) Colette and Paul Micallef
Canada Goose	Feb 22	HAS-FM529/Katy-Hockley Rd (50) Kat D (unconfirmed)
Cinnamon Teal	Feb 17-20	CAM-Cameron Prairie NWR, Pintail Lp (1) Tyler Williams et al
Black Scoter	Jan 31	HAS -Miramar Park area S of La Porte (1) continuing bird
Long-tailed Duck	Feb 17	CAM-Rutherford Beach (3) Robert Dobbs
Brown Booby	Feb 9	HAS-just S of Hartman Bridge (1) Joshua Jaeger (ad fem)
Harris's Hawk	Feb 2-19	GAL-Smith Oaks (1) mult. Obs (cont bird); 2 ad+imm rept Feb 25
Swainson's Hawk	Feb 4	HAS-Sheldon Lake SP (1) R. Jonathon Jakubcin
Gt. Black-backed Gull	Feb 4	CAM-Broussard Beach (1) Phillip Wallace, Dave Patton, Paul Conover (1st winter)
Sandwich Tern	Feb 4	HAS--Miramar Park area S of La Porte (1) Kurt Nguyen
Common Tern	Feb 20 Feb 24	CAM-E Jetty Bch (1) John Dillon CAM-Holly Bch (1) Wm Matthews
Common Nighthawk	Feb 5	GAL-Galveston 61st St nr. Central City Blvd (1) Duke Liebler
Eastern Whip-poor-will	Feb 25 Feb 24	HAS-Seabrook (1) Hilary Gibbs LIB-FM1008 5 mi N of Kenefick (1) Paul Micalle
Ruby-thr. Hummingbird	Feb 2	LIB-FM1008 5 mi N of Kenefick (1) Colette Micallef
Black-chin Hummingbird	Feb 2-16	LIB-FM1008 5 mi N of Kenefick (1 fem) Colette and Paul Micallef
Ladder-backed Wdpkr	Feb 18	GAL-Lafitte's Cove (1) Sally Pachulski
Hairy Woodpecker	Feb 19	HAS-Memorial City (1) Shyon Ahmadi (uncfmd)
Crested Caracara	Feb 26	LIB-FM1413 ne TX146 (1) Colette Micallef (rare in Liberty Co.)
Greater Pewee	Feb 1-6	HAS-Bear Creek Park, Bathroom #9 area (1) continuing bird

Say's Phoebe	Feb 13	CAM-Sweet Lake Land Co HQ (1) David Booth, Deanna Griggs et al
Vermilion Flycatcher	Feb 22	LIB-CR137/Gates Rd (1) Paul Micallef (male)
	Feb 25	LIB-CR2107 (2) Colette and Paul Micallef (both males)
Great Kiskadee	Feb 3-24	CHA-Augusta St, Northpoint (2) Carl Poldrack (continuing birds from last year)
Couch's Kingbird	Jan 31-Feb 13	CAL-Rossignol Rd (1) multiple obs (continuing bird)
Northern Waterthrush	Jan 31	CAM-Oak Grove Sanct.(1) Robert Dobbs
Black-and-white Warbler	Feb 4	CAM-Willow Island (1) continuing6bird
Nashville Warbler	Feb 2-24	LIB-FM1008 5 mi N of Kenefick (1) Colette and Paul Micallef
Northern Parula	Feb 18	HAS-Seabrook (1) Hilary Gibbs
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	thru Feb 2	HAS-nr. Clay@Barker Cypress (1) Timothy White (male) (continuing bird)
Y-r (Audubon's) Warbler	Jan 28	HAS-Williamsburg Colony (1) Hank George
	Feb 2-26	HAS-Towne Lake (1) Greg Page
Yellow-throated Warbler	Feb 4	CAM-Willow Is (1) continuing bird
	Feb 7	HAS-Seabrook (1) Hilary Gibbs
Harris's Sparrow	Jan 30	CAM-Willow Is (2) continuing
Western Tanager	Feb 4	HAS-Baer Creek Pk near Rest Room #9 (1) continuing bird
Painted Bunting	Feb 1-18	CAL-S of IH210 1 mi east of Prien Lake (1) Melissa Simon (male)
	Feb 6	CHA-Turtle Bayou Nature Preserve (1 female) Duke Liebler
	Feb 8	CHA-Tx Chemier Plain HQ and Visitor Center(2) Dwayne Litteer
	Feb 7-26	GAL-nr. Marina Blvd (1) Sally Pachulski (female)
Yellow-headed Blackbird	Feb 26	CHA-ANWR (1) Dennis Shepler
Western Meadowlark	Feb 25	HAS-EI Franco Lee Park (1) Marie Asscherick
Bullock's Oriole	Feb 1-17	HAS-Robt C Stuart Park (1 ad male) continuing bird
	Feb 6	HAS-west of Bayland Park (1 imm male) Jessica Kim

**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..

**Commentary is on page 3.**

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

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### RARE BIRD ALERTS

Unfortunately, almost all the local and regional telephone Rare Bird Alerts have been discontinued in favor of various 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](http://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.