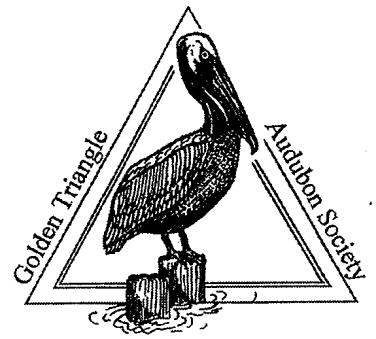


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 24 No. 9

September 2018

Membership Meeting
Thursday September 20, 2018 7:00 p.m.
Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont

Smith Point Hawk Watch
and other Gulf Coast Bird Observatory programs

Susan Heath
Director of Conservation Research
Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

Sue is a native Texan who returned to the state in 2007 after being transplanted to Virginia for 24 years. She received a Master's in Biology from George Mason University for her work on wintering waterfowl on the Northern Virginia Piedmont and a Ph.D. from the same institution in the spring of 2008. Her dissertation involved the effects of pesticides on birds that nest in agriculture in the north central states. She is thrilled to be back in her home state of Texas. At GCBO, she coordinates all conservation research including American Oystercatcher Stewardship, Beach Nesting Birds, Non-breeding Shorebirds, Motus Tower Network, Eastern Willet Migration, and the Smith Point Hawk Watch.

This will be a very timely program as our September Field Trip on September 29 will be to the Smith Point Hawk Watch. Further details on page 2.

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

The Brown Pelican

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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 gtaudubon@aol.com.

**Saturday September 15, 2018
Jefferson County Fall Migration Count.** This is an all-county count. Contact John Whittle (409-722-4193 or johnawhittle@aol.com) to offer to help or for more details.

Thursday September 20, 2018. Membership Meeting. See page 1. For details.

Refreshments

Each month, we rely on volunteers to provide the refreshments at our membership meeting. We thank all those who brought refreshments over the last few meetings. **We need volunteers to bring items for all remaining 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 September 22, 2018. Sabine Woods Work Day. 7:30 a.m. to noon. Contact John Whittle (409-722-4193 or johnawhittle@aol.com) to offer to help or for more details.

Saturday September 29, 2018. Field Trip to Smith Point Hawk Watch.

Our leaders will be there from about 8:30 a.m. Hopefully, this will be close to a peak in this year's Broad-winged Hawk migration, but there will always be some hawks. Any day from mid-September through mid or late October should produce a good number of migrating hawks.

To reach the Smith Point Hawk Watch site from Winnie, take Highway 124 south towards High Island. After 12 miles, turn right on FM1985 and follow it about 14 1/2 miles (NWR) until it meets FM562. Follow FM562 14 miles to Smith Point. Continue straight until almost reaching the bay, and turn left, bearing left again to the parking area next to the Hawk Watch Tower on the Candy Abshier Wildlife Management Area. It takes at least 90 minutes from the Golden Triangle to reach the site. This Field Trip is much more a come and go as you wish trip, and help on hawk identification is always available on the tower during Hawk Watch season!

Our leaders may lead a group into the nearby woods looking for migrants, but you may stay on the tower if you wish. Mosquitoes are not normally a problem on the tower. Availability of food and fuel is essentially non-existent in Smith Point, so bring your lunch!

The Smith Point Hawk Watch is conducted every day from August 1 through the end of October by the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory.

Historically, the peak of Broad-wing Hawk migration was September 25, although in recent years at Smith Point, it has tended to be later and less uniform. In recent years there has often been a brief one-day spike in the Sep. 20-24 time frame – Sep. 22-23 last year – followed by a higher and prolonged surge Oct. 11- 19. Previous years' results are at <http://hawkcount.org>, so you can do your own analysis! The exact peak day probably depends more on the weather on the migration path from Pennsylvania down to east Texas, and particularly on the two or three days prior. Should a cold front pass through, the days immediately following usually have a north wind, and there tend to be more migrating hawks of all species on those days. For more information, contact Steve Mayes (gtaudubon@aol.com).

Thursday October 18, 2018. Membership Meeting. See next month's *Brown Pelican* for details.

Saturday October 20, 2018. (Tentative.) Field Trip to Sabine Woods. Leader Steve Mayes. Meet at Sabine Woods, which is 4.1 miles west of Sabine Pass on the north side of Highway 87 at 7:30 a.m. Further details in next month's issue.

Larue "Tex" Wells

It is with great sadness that we record the passing of Larue "Tex" Wells in Ann Arbor, Michigan on August 16, 2018, just a few days shy of his 97th birthday.

Tex was born in Rockport, Texas, but soon moved to Port Arthur, Texas where his father was a tugboat captain. In July of 1942 he enlisted in the Army as an Aviation Cadet. After training at various fields in Texas, Texas was shipped to North Africa, then the focal point of the war in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Shortly after arriving in North Africa, his unit, the 37th Squadron of the 316th Troop Carrier Group, 9th Air Force moved to Sicily in September 1943, and then in February 1944, to Cottesmore, in what was then the English County of Rutland, on the east coast, just north of the Wash.

Tex was reluctant to talk about his war time service, but the story deserves to be told. Tex participated in three of the most famous airborne operations of World War II. In the early morning of D-day, June 6, 1944, Texas was the 2nd Pilot on C-47 (DC-3) 42-24328 which dropped paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division very close to the town of St. Mere Eglise, perhaps the most famous town in the entire Normandy invasion. These troops were dropped some distance inland before any of the seaborne troops came onshore with a mission to prevent German reinforcements from reaching the shore area.

Later, as the front lines pressed eastward towards Germany, Tex, by then a First Pilot, flew a C-47 that dropped paratroops in Operation Market Garden, the only partially successful assault in September 1944 intended to control the bridges over the River Rhine separating the Netherlands and Germany. Still later, Tex was the First Pilot of C-47 43-48413 dropping paratroops on March 24, 1945 at Wiesel, Germany in Operation Varsity, the successful crossing of the Rhine that was the major breakthrough leading to the defeat of Germany in May 1945. (Interestingly enough, the airplane Tex flew on that mission later served with the French in Vietnam. After the French were defeated in Vietnam in 1954, the airplane was returned to the US Air Force, and is currently on display at the History and Traditions Museum at Lackland Air Force Base (Joint Base San Antonio) in San Antonio, Tex.) By the time World War II ended in Europe, Texas was already on a ship returning to the United States where he spent a very short period transporting soldiers from North Carolina to Texas and Minnesota for redeployment to the Pacific.

After the war, he earned a Master's Degree in Fisheries Biology at the University of Minnesota, and was hired by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service at their office in Marquette, Michigan. After 15 months he transferred to the office in Ann Arbor where he spent the majority of his career conducting population studies of various fish species in Lake Michigan. He retired in 1988.

He became an avid grouse and woodcock hunter and continued this pursuit throughout most of his early and mid life. Although he was an avid hunter, he was an even more avid birder. It started in the late 40s with an ornithology class at the University of Minnesota and continued throughout his life. Tex birded in 23 countries around the world and had a life list of nearly 4300 species, a truly major accomplishment considering there are only around 10,000 species of bird in the

entire world. While his North American life list was an impressive 760, one of his most proudest accomplishments was seeing 400 species in Michigan alone. In many years his annual Michigan list was around 300 species, with his best year totaling 307. He was widely known and highly regarded throughout Michigan as one of its premier birders. He came back to Texas during the spring each year until a few years ago, and was known by most of our local birders as a frequent Sabine Woods visitor. He also came back and participated in the Bolivar Peninsula Christmas Count for many years.

He will be missed. There will be no service. His ashes will be returned to Texas and scattered in Sabine Woods.

A full account of his D-day mission can be found at <http://www.6juin1944.com/veterans/rice.php>

Grand Opening of Wetlands Education Center at Cattail Marsh --- Tuesday October 16, 2018 5:00 p.m.

You are invited to the Grand Opening of the Wetlands Education Center at Cattail Marsh on Tuesday October 16 at 5:00 p.m.

In 2016, the Garden Club of America Founder's Fund awarded \$10,000 to the Magnolia Garden Club towards the construction of the Wetlands Education Center at Cattail Marsh. This facility will provide an elevated classroom setting for an introduction to the importance of wetlands as well as a site for further scientific study.

Membership Dues

To simplify our record keeping, all memberships now run from January through December. Membership dues effective with 2019 dues are \$20 per year. We are now accepting 2019 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. All dues already paid in advance for 2019 will be honored. 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.

We would very much encourage you receive the Brown Pelican electronically. To start that, simply send an email to gtaudubon@aol.com from the address you want us to use. Please include your full name if it is not contained within your email address.

Five Chicks Hatched This Year in LDWF's Whooping Crane Reintroduction Project

Release Date: 08/20/2018

Five whooping crane chicks have hatched and fledged this summer in southwest Louisiana, marking a major milestone in the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries whooping crane reintroduction project. The five chicks are the most to hatch in one year in the nascent project, which launched in 2011. The first chicks hatched in 2016 with one chick fledging, followed by three chicks hatching in 2017, also with a single fledgling surviving. "This year was a big step forward and we're excited and pleased," said Sara Zimorski, an LDWF biologist with the whooping crane reintroduction project. "To see young birds producing their own fertile eggs and to be successful in raising a chick is a sure sign of progress. To have five chicks this year only two years after we had the first chick hatching, it's a pretty significant jump. We hope we'll continue to see improvement as we have more pairs that mature and start to breed." Louisiana's whooping crane reintroduction project began in 2011 when 10 whooping cranes from the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center were released at the White Lake Wetlands Conservations Area in Vermilion Parish to develop the non-migratory flock. This marked a significant conservation milestone with the first wild whooping cranes in Louisiana since 1950. Each year since, more whooping cranes have been added to the initial flock and the current population is 66 (61 adults plus the five chicks hatched earlier this spring).

Support of partners including Chevron, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Audubon Nature Institute, U.S. Geological Survey, Louisiana Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, Coypu Foundation, Entergy, Cameron LNG, International Crane Foundation and Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation have allowed LDWF to expand its effort in Louisiana.

Whooping cranes are slow to mature and only lay one to two eggs during the spring. So reproduction can be a slow process. The cranes normally don't reach sexual maturity until 3-5 years old and the cranes when introduced into Louisiana have been less than 1 year-old. "A 3-year-old laying eggs or hatching a chick isn't always successful the first time," Zimorski said. "Sometimes it takes several years. This year, some pairs were successful the first go-around. That was great to see. Additionally, we had some younger members of pairs that were successful in raising these chicks. Of these pairs that successfully raised chicks two of the males were only 2 years old, which is on the young side. It's really encouraging to see young birds starting to reproduce actually being successful."

The cranes were hatched in late April and early May. They grow fast, about an inch a day and by the time they're three months old, they stand from 4.5 to 5 feet tall. "The reason they grow so fast is so they can evade predators," Zimorski said. "They're vulnerable until they've fledged so the parents care for them and protect them. Typically, whooping crane chicks will remain with their parents for around 10 months." All five chicks were hatched on private lands in southwest Louisiana, in crawfish fields. Zimorski said the cooperation of private

landowners and farmers is vital to the success of the project. "The birds really like this habitat and they'll continue to use it," Zimorski said. "So our ongoing partnership with these landowners and farmers is very important and we thank them for their support."

Anyone encountering a whooping crane is advised to observe the bird from a distance and to report the sighting to LDWF (<http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/webform/whooping-crane-reporting-form>). Whooping cranes are large-bodied, white birds with a red head and black facial markings. Birds measure a height of five feet and have a wingspan of seven to eight feet that makes them very distinctive. In flight, whooping cranes display black wing tips, a fully extended neck and legs which extend well beyond the tail.

For videos, photos, and other background information, go to <https://ldwf.cantoflight.com/v/WhoopingCraneChicks/landing>

Ville Platte Man Cited for Shooting Whooping Crane

Release Date: 08/02/2018

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) enforcement agents cited a Ville Platte man on July 26 for allegedly shooting an endangered whooping crane in Evangeline Parish. Agents cited Gilvin P. Aucoin, 52, for violating the Endangered Species Act after he admitted to shooting a whooping crane.

Agents were notified about a shot whooping crane that was found near a crawfish pond in the northeast corner of Evangeline Parish. Agents responded to the area and questioned Aucoin, who was working on the land at the time the crane was shot. During questioning he admitted to shooting the crane with a .22 caliber rifle on July 25 while working on the property. Agents seized the .22 caliber rifle. Violating the Endangered Species Act brings up to a \$50,000 fine and a year in jail.

LDWF has released 125 whooping cranes since 2011 and are currently tracking 65 whooping cranes. The male crane in this case was released in 2011.

Anyone witnessing suspicious activity involving whooping cranes is advised to call the LDWF's Enforcement Division at 1-800-442-2511 or use the tip411 program, which may offer a cash reward for information leading to arrests or convictions. To use the tip411 program, citizens can text LADWF and their tip to 847411 or download the "LADWF Tips" iPhone app from the Apple iTunes store free of charge. Citizen Observer, the tip411 provider, uses technology that removes all identifying information before LDWF receives the text so that LDWF cannot identify the sender.

Field Trip to Liberty-Dayton 11 August 2018

August 11 arrived with a distinctly unsettled weather system over most of Southeast Texas, and a few showers around. However, we were able to complete our normal half day trip without any participant getting wet. The primary target on this field trip is the Swallow-tailed Kite. This graceful raptor had declined to the point that it was a rare sight in the area, but populations started to recover early this century. The species became more conspicuous as birds congregated in the Trinity River bottoms between Liberty and Dayton in the first half of August each year, as they fed on dragonflies rising from the marshy areas. They were seen with increasing frequency from Highway 90 between the two cities. In some years, at the peak, over 30 birds could sometimes be seen there. While the numbers counted at the Hawk Watches at Smith Point and Hazel Bazemore Park near Corpus Christi have continued to slowly increase, strongly suggesting a continuation of the trend, we have not seen as many in the Trinity River bottoms. Perhaps they have spread out more, and the increasing numbers of summer sightings over Southeast Texas suggest more are breeding locally, and may even have found other stopover points on their fall migration.

As is customary, we first drove along the highway from Liberty to Dayton and back, but failed to see any kites. We did note a Wood Stork, another species sought out locally during post-breeding dispersal from colonies in Florida or on the Gulf coast of Mexico. Not seeing any, we proceeded to the Liberty Municipal Park. In past years, we have sometimes seen kites over this well maintained and recently improved park. But one unit of the Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge shares a length of its southern boundary with the park, and a trail, the Knobby Knees Trail, has been developed. This crosses next to a pond, which had a Great Blue Heron, a Little Blue Heron and a Tricolored Heron around its perimeter. The trail then crosses and levee and enters the wooded area. Close to the levee were a good variety of passerine birds, most of which were able to be seen in the upper branches of the trees. These included a Yellow-throated Vireo, two White-eyed Vireos, two Carolina Chickadees, two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and three Yellow-billed Cuckoos. A couple of Tufted Titmice eventually joined the flock. It was perhaps a little surprising to find that the bottomlands on the other side of the levee were not under water, despite recent heavy rains. Sure, the area was moist enough but without significant standing water. Proceeding leisurely along the trail, viewing several species of butterfly, we heard and then saw two Acadian Flycatchers and heard another. Here were distant woodpeckers calling, probably including a Pileated Woodpecker that we had seen on a utility pole, and we turned on to the road that leads to the park, and certainly including a much nearer Red-bellied Woodpecker. We even heard a distant but clear Barred Owl call.

We eventually reached the area of boardwalks where the Knobby Knees trail crosses a very small stream and joins other trails which extend a long way further north into the Refuge. After a lot of coaxing, we got a reaction from a male

Prothonotary Warbler. We all had great looks at this bird, which had very visible areas of bare skin around the head, indicating that it was in full fall molt, not something we see very often. We then proceeded back at a slightly enhanced pace to the park. At this point the group formation discipline was completely lost. Some went to view the swallows that they had seen on wires on the norther side of the park. They turned out to include some Purple Martins, some Barn Swallows, and others that we probably Cliff Swallows. The majority, however, continued round the ends of the park as we have done most years. They reported finding a Black-and-white Warbler, a Yellow-throated Warbler, more Carolina Chickadees. Caroline Wrens, Mississippi Kites, and eventually a Northern Parula. Others found a perched Mississippi Kite. Even though high noon was almost upon us, the temperature was still reasonably pleasant for mid-August.

Acting on a telephoned tip from another group birding the Liberty area that morning, some of us proceeded back to the highway between Liberty and Dayton, and this time were able to find at least five Swallow-tailed Kites, two or three of them climbing high over the highway, and others low over the trees on the south side. A Wood Stork circled for a long time over the highway.

After this, we were able to reassemble at JAX Hamburgers in Liberty. After lunch, some of us tried the highway again, but the kites were not anywhere to be seen. On the way home, we stopped at the waterbird roost on the south side Highway 90 just inside Jefferson County. We were rewarded with the sight of about 80 Wood Storks perched on the pine trees along with a large number of Cattle Egrets. It is not clear when the birds are moving around, but on the way to Liberty in the morning at about 6:00 a.m., we had seen only four, although there may have been mores we could not see. We did look unsuccessfully at the Doguet Turf Farm on Highway 326 just north of Highway 90 for Buff-breasted Sandpipers reported there in the preceding days.

This was a very successful trip at a time of year when trips are "difficult" because it is a little early to look for fall migrants, most breeding pairs have finished feeding offspring and dispersed, and it can be unpleasantly hot. Birds seen: Black-bellied Whistling-Duck; Wood Stork; Great Blue Heron; Great Egret; Little Blue Heron; Tricolored Heron; White Ibis; Turkey Vulture; Black Vulture, Mississippi Kite; Red-tailed Hawk; Killdeer; Mourning Dove; Yellow-billed Cuckoo; Barred Owl; Chimney Swift; Red-bellied Woodpecker; Downy Woodpecker; Pileated Woodpecker; Acadian Flycatcher; Loggerhead Shrike; White-eyed Vireo; Yellow-throated Vireo; Red-eyed Vireo; Blue Jay; American Crow; Purple Martin; Barn Swallow; Cliff Swallow; Carolina Chickadee; Tufted Titmouse; Carolina Wren; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher; Northern Mockingbird; European Starling; Black-and-white Warbler; Prothonotary Warbler; Northern Parula; Yellow-throated Warbler; Northern Cardinal.

John A. Whittle

Field Trip to Bolivar Flats – 18 August 2018

There is a good reason for choosing Bolivar Flats for the August field trip. The temperature is usually brutal everywhere in August and the bugs in the wooded areas can be unbearable. But on the beach? Well, still hot but at least there is usually a breeze and no bugs to speak of (at least during the day). The other reason to choose Bolivar Flats is that it is the most reliable spot for lots of birds on the upper Texas coast. There is certainly variation from month to month but you can always count on Bolivar Flats to produce birds.

Walking from the parking area, birds were immediately apparent. A Long-billed Curlew stalked along the beach and a Reddish Egret hunted in the surf. Sanderlings are always a fixture here and they fed in a variety of plumages along the waterline. A colorful Ruddy Turnstone flipped over shells looking for small prey while Least Sandpipers picked over the sand. Moving further down the beach, more and more birds came into view. The first of many Piping Plovers seen on the day was located with some of the birds sporting colorful leg bands representing projects based on their nesting grounds far north of Texas. The other small plovers took a little more time to find but all were pretty easily located. First came Semipalmated Plovers, very similar in appearance to the Piping but darker colored. Next, a cadre of Snowy Plovers, with their longer, thinner bills, were spotted. Finally, here and there among the other shorebirds, a few larger Wilson's Plovers were enjoyed by the group. Adding in some Black-bellied Plovers on the day and the group swept all of the expected plovers.

Several more Reddish Egrets were seen. These included both dark-morph and white-morph birds and some even put on their famous dancing feeding display. American Oystercatchers were also located on the flats. These colorful, large-billed shorebirds are usually found on this field trip but are not always seen on the flats themselves.

Other shorebirds were also found on the flats. Semipalmated Sandpipers were fairly common on the beach and Marbled Godwits were easily seen in the shallow waters. A single Whimbrel was eventually located and a few Short-billed Dowitchers fed in pools. Willets are rarely hard to find on the flats but are they eastern Willets or western Willets? These are two distinct groups that many anticipate being split into different species in the future. Eastern Willets nest on the upper Texas coast and are abundant during the summer but head south for the winter while Western Willets are common here in the winter but head north (and west) for the summer. During migration, both may be observed on Bolivar Flats so it is a good time to learn to tell them apart! A couple of Red Knots gave some birders a lifer species. Though never really abundant on the upper Texas coast, Red Knots are more easily found on Bolivar than on the beaches in Jefferson County. A single Baird's Sandpiper was also a nice find on the beach.

Almost all of the many gulls seen on the flats were Laughing Gulls but there were one or two Ring-billed Gulls around. Among terns, there were several numerous species. Royal Terns were the most common of the larger terns but a careful search revealed some even larger Caspian Terns as well. It took even more searching to find Sandwich Terns but a couple were finally located. Least Terns were not hard to

find at all with a good mixture of adult and young birds. Mixed among them were quite a few Black Terns most of which entering their much less black winter plumage.

There are generally not a great number of passerine species on Bolivar Flats (though there are usually some grackles hanging around) but there is one species that is always sought after on this field trip – Horned Lark. Horned Lark is a very common species in parts of west Texas but is much harder on the upper coast. In Jefferson County, this is a rare species worthy of a rare bird alert but it is a regular, if not always easy to see, species at Bolivar Flats. Past field trips have sometimes missed this species but both adult and immature birds were well seen on the day.

After leaving the flats there were still more birds to be seen in the Bolivar area. Bob's Road added Green Heron and Osprey to the day list. Yacht Basin Road gave the group Spotted Sandpiper and a brief look at a Black Skimmer. Rollover Pass is usually reliable for birds and gave the birders Common Tern and a flyover Eastern Kingbird. A stop at Boy Scout Woods in High Island gave a chance at some migrant land birds. Mosquitos surely outnumbered birds but there were still some nice finds in the sanctuary. A Canada Warbler played hide and seek in the thick vegetation and a Hooded Warbler was not much more cooperative. A Black-and-white Warbler was also found along with Red-eyed Vireo, Great Crested Flycatcher was located and a couple of White-tailed Kites were perched up on a nearby power line.

High Island always provides a nice ending to a day full of birds. Whether its songbirds or shorebirds, the August field trip always has something for every birder. Still, all of the birders await that first cool front of fall hoping it will push some interesting migrant birds down to the coast.

The following species were recorded by the trip leaders:

Pied-billed Grebe (1); Eurasian Collared-Dove (3); White-winged Dove (1); Mourning Dove (3); Ruby-throated Hummingbird (3); Common Nighthawk (1); Clapper Rail (3); Common Gallinule (2); Black-necked Stilt (4); American Oystercatcher (5); Black-bellied Plover (10); Killdeer (1); Snowy Plover (12); Wilson's Plover (7); Semipalmated Plover (45); Piping Plover (21); Whimbrel (1); Long-billed Curlew (4); Marbled Godwit (30); Ruddy Turnstone (5); Red Knot (2); Sanderling (115); Baird's Sandpiper (1); Least Sandpiper (55); Semipalmated Sandpiper (35); Short-billed Dowitcher (30); Short-billed/Long-billed Dowitcher (25); Spotted Sandpiper (1); Willet (35); Lesser Yellowlegs (2); Laughing Gull (116); Ring-billed Gull (3); Least Tern (100); Caspian Tern (5); Black Tern (45); Common Tern (2); Forster's Tern (35); Royal Tern (149); Sandwich Tern (5); Black Skimmer (9); Magnificent Frigatebird (3); Neotropic Cormorant (12); Brown Pelican (175); Great Blue Heron (6); Great Egret (6); Snowy Egret (5); Tricolored Heron (6); Reddish Egret (8); Green Heron (2); Yellow-crowned Night-Heron (2); White Ibis (7); Roseate Spoonbill (3); Black Vulture (2); Turkey Vulture (4); Osprey (1); White-tailed Kite (5); Great Crested Flycatcher (1); Eastern Kingbird (2); Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (1); Loggerhead Shrike (2); Red-eyed Vireo (1); Blue Jay (1); Horned Lark (4); Barn Swallow (20); Cliff Swallow (1); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (1); Northern Mockingbird (3); Eastern Meadowlark (1); Orchard Oriole (2); Red-winged Blackbird (1); Great-tailed Grackle (10); Boat-tailed/Great-tailed Grackle (4); Black and White Warbler (1); Yellow Warbler (1); Hooded Warbler (1); Canada Warbler (1); Northern Cardinal (6)

Steve Mayes

Bird Sightings – August 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.

Commentary. It has been several months now since we have had space in this column to offer any commentary!

First we need to note that we have always used the "taxonomic order" sequence published by the Checklist Committee of the American Ornithological Society (formerly the American Ornithological Union or AOU). Up until publication of the latest sequence in June this year, the sequence had been fairly stable for several years, with no "major" families being moved. The 2018 sequence, however, involves some major changes that will take more than a little getting used to. We have elected to proceed as follows. We will continue in this column to use the previous sequence through the end of this calendar year, and fully adopt the

revised sequence by the February 2019 issue. For counts, including the Migration Counts and Christmas Counts that we compile, the field sheets and spreadsheets of previous results that we provide for use in the field will use the previous sequence. Final results will be made available to participants in both sequences, but archival lists will be in the new sequence. Multi-year spreadsheets will be converted to the new sequence, but archival copies of single counts already posted on our website will not be changed.

Most new AOS checklist updates involve splits and lumps, and sometimes changed names. There are many changes, mostly splits, in scientific names, but we only use scientific names in the *Brown Pelican* in rare unusual circumstances, because the more widely known common names of all local, and indeed, all US birds are standardized by the AOS. Changes in common names do not affect any local birds, but many readers may have seen Canada Jays elsewhere in North America. In 1957, the Canada Jay was renamed Gray Jay, but in a nod to the possible adoption of this species as the National Bird of Canada, the Committee broke its own guidelines disfavoring changes in the absence of compelling ornithological considerations and changed the name back to Canada Jay. Many will have seen what was relatively recently split as Passerini's Tanager, very common in Central America. This species and Cherrie's Tanager have been re-lumped (a rarity with recent AOS Checklist Committees) as Scarlet-rumped Tanager.

Seen in our Core Counties (listed above)

Ringed Teal	Aug 1-6	JEF-Cattail Marsh (1) HS et al
Green-winged Teal	Aug 1-6	JEF-TP (1 m) HS et al
Northern Gannet	Aug 24	JEF-SRSP (1) Philip Robinson
Black Rail	Aug 5	JEF-SRSP (2) Kendra Kocab (heard only)
Sora	Aug 6	JEF-TP (1) Laura Wilson, David Bell, Cathy Hines
Bewick's Wren	Aug 6	TYL-CR 4777 Warren (2) Lisa Appelbaum
Golden-winged Warbler	Aug 24	JEF-SW (1) Philip Robinson
White-throated Sparrow	Aug 7	SAB-Sabinatown (1) David Bell

Nearby Counties

Red-breasted Merganser	Aug 4-11	GAL-Texas City Dike (1) Sandy Parker et al; taken for rehab Aug 11
Brown Booby	Aug 19	CAM-Cameron (5) James Holmes (3 ad, 2 imm)
Reddish Egret	Aug 9	CAL-Tom Hebert Rd (1) David Booth
	Aug 20	CAL-Helms Rd (1) Judson Lassiter
American White Pelican	Aug 19	CAL-Fruge Rd (9) Oscar Johnson, Lauren Solomon
American Bittern	Jul 31	CHA-ANWR Shoveler Pond (1) Kelly McDowell
	Aug 23	CHA-ANWR (1) Shearwater Journeys et al.
Harris's Hawk	Aug 23	CHA-Smith Pt Hawk Watch (1) Terry Baldwin
Black Rail	Aug 9	CAM-Hwy 82 Cameron (1) Sam Saunders, Sarah Bolinger (heard only)

Lsr. Black-backed Gull	Aug 11-27	HAS-Morgan's Pt (1) Jas. Rieman, Greg Page et al, (sometimes in Chambers County waters)
Olive-sided Flycatcher	Aug 4	CHA-Smith Pt Hawk Watch (1) Terry Baldwin
Couch's Kingbird	Aug 8	HAS-LBJ Hospital (1) Rodney Allen
Bell's Vireo	Aug 25	CAM-Lighthouse Rd (1) Paul Conover
White-breast. Nuthatch	Aug 14	HAS-Huffman (3) Bonnie de Grood
	Aug 15	HAS-Kingwood (1) Bonnie de Grood
House Wren	Aug 11	HAS-Bellaire (1) Barbara Stern
Black-thr. Green Warbler	Aug 5	HAS-Bear Creek Pk (1) Jim Hinson
Yellow-headed Blackbird	Aug 11	CHA-ANWR-exact location not given (1) Daniel Elting
Lesser Goldfinch	Aug 12	HAS-Sunrise Beach (1) Suzanne Mottin
Pin-tailed Whydah	Aug 16	HAS-Memorial City (1) James Rieman

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; 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..

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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.