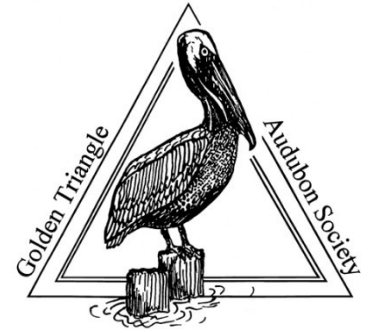


The Brown Pelican



The Newsletter of the Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Vol. 32 No 10

October 2026

**Membership Meeting
Thursday October 15, 2026 7:00 p.m.
Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont**

Nathaniel "Nate" Cooley Corpus Christi Hawk Watch

The Corpus Christi Hawk Watch is conducted from an elevated platform near the crest of a hill within Hazel Bazemore County Park, and overlooks a horseshoe bend on the southern bank of Nueces River about 17 miles west of Corpus Christi. Detailed directions to the site are on the Hawk Watch.org web site at hawkwatch.org/migration-network/corpus-christi/

On account of its location, large numbers of southbound migrating hawks, especially Broad-winged Hawks, from two of the principal North American migration corridors pass over the area – one the Appalachian/Eastern Ridge Route following the ridgelines down through Pennsylvania and the Appalachians, moving generally from the northwest toward the southeast; the other the Great Lakes and Coastal Route(s) skirting around the edges of Lake Superior and Lake Erie (with some following the Atlantic coastline). While the hawks passing over our local Smith Point count are generally only those coming down the Appalachian route, those from the Great Lakes route (over the Detroit area) join up with those from the Appalachian route before both reach the southern part of Texas, funneled to the western shore of the Gulf passing over or near Corpus Christi.

Nathaniel ("Nate" Cooley is a Washington state native and a Washington State University graduate, has been an avid birder since college, and that is where he first learned about hawkwatching. His first job out of college was at the Corpus hawkwatch and is now in his third season of working at the HWI site back here in Corpus, having spent this spring in Tubac, Arizona. Since he started, he has counted over a million raptors over all his seasons, across 26 different species of raptor!

We plan to have the doors open at 6:00 p.m. The meeting will start at 7:00 p.m.

. The Brown Pelican

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Issue number 332

Golden Triangle Audubon Society

Web Site for more information
www.goldentriangleaudubon.org

Board of Directors (2026)

President (acting)

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Vice President

To be elected at Annual Meeting
November 2026

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Facebook Administrators

Phoung Conway, John Mariani and

Jana Whittle

Newsletter Distribution

Christine Sliva

Newsletter Editor

John Whittle

(gtaudubon@aol.com)

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P. O. Box 1292, Nederland, Texas
77627-1292

email: gtaudubon@aol.com

Calendar of Events

Important Note: Field Trip notices published here are subject to last minute changes. Changes will always be posted on the web site at www.goldentriangleaudubon.org.

Future Programs and Field Trips. Always check the website goldentriangleaudubon.org for possible changes.

Saturday October 3, 2026. Sabine Woods Work Day. CANCELLED.

Faced with a very wet forecast we have decided to cancel the Fall Sabine Woods Work Day we had scheduled for Saturday October 3. Fortunately, we had already completed most of the necessary "heavy" fall mowing. Nevertheless, if you want to help at the Woods at any other time, there is always a variety of tasks available. Please contact John Whittle at gtaudubon.org or call and leave a message at 409-722-4193.

Saturday October 10, 2026. International Migratory Bird Day.

This year, we have decided to hold our **Fall Migration Count** on this day. We were a little reluctant to change the date away from the third Saturday in September to the Second Saturday in October as it will now be a few years until we can meaningfully compare the results in one year to a number of immediately preceding years.

This is an all-Jefferson County count contact John Whittle at gtaudubon.org or call and leave a message at 409-722-4193. Even if you can only participate during the morning, your help will be welcome.

Thursday October 15, 2026. Membership Meeting, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont. Nate Cooley on Corpus Christi Hawk Watch. See page 1 for details.

Directions to Tyrrell Park

From the South

Go "north" on US69/96/287 around the south side of Beaumont. Take Highway 124 west (left) towards Fannett.

At the first light, turn left onto Tyrrell Park Road and go about 3/4 mile.

Turn left into the park through the arch. The Garden Center is on the left. For Cattail Marsh, continue ahead and

proceed about two-thirds of the way round the main loop and into the well-marked Cattail Marsh parking area on the right.

From IH10

Exit at Walden Road on the west side of Beaumont and turn south (right) on Walden Road. At the light at Highway 124, go straight ahead on Tyrrell Park Road and then as above.

Saturday October 17, 2026. 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. or join the trip in progress in the woods later. Waterproof footwear will probably be a good idea, especially if it is at all wet from previous rain or just heavy early morning dew. Bring mosquito repellent just in case. There are few services available on weekends in Sabine Pass.

October 17 is towards the end of fall songbird migration, but often brings a good variety of birds. A cold front may drive down the last of the warblers and the first big push of wintering birds. Some of our winter birds may be arriving, and often the woodland species that winter in the Big Thicket overshoot a little at first. In some past years, this has included Red-breasted Nuthatch and Brown Creeper. There are always interesting birds at Sabine Woods! Birding Sabine Woods is relatively easy walking.

Golden Triangle Audubon Facebook

Join us on Facebook! There is a Golden Triangle Audubon group on Facebook, moderated by Phuong Conway, John Mariani and Jana Whittle. Our aim is to provide a space for people around the Golden Triangle to share pictures, sightings, and other information about birds, other nature, and local birding sites and habitats. All levels of pictures are welcome, especially of less common birds. If you are looking for help with identification, please include the location and date of the picture, as both are important in narrowing the possibilities. Send your contribution through a Facebook message or an email to gtaudubon@aol.com

Thursday November 19, 2026 Annual Meeting and Elections

The Annual Meeting of Golden Triangle Audubon Society will take place on November 19, 2026 in the Garden Center, Tyrrell Park, Beaumont, Texas. At this meeting, we will hold elections for all officer positions and all At-Large Board positions. To nominate someone for any position, contact the chair of the Nominating Committee. Steve Mayes. Please in the first instance email him at gtaudubon@aol.com. Nominations from the floor will be in order but must be accompanied by affirmation, either orally at the meeting or in writing, that the candidate is willing to serve.

We are also always seeking contributions to the running of the Society in the form of new volunteers, as we must have new blood, and especially younger blood! If necessary, we will be happy to arrange for you to act as an understudy to an existing volunteer for a year (or two) if necessary.

If you are able to help with maintenance work at Sabine Woods, we will welcome your help. This does not need to be on an organized work day, although we prefer that you not work alone. There is always some relatively light clearing of trails and removal of undesirable vegetation waiting to be accomplished.

Saturday November 21, 2026

Field Trip to West Jefferson County

In recent years, this has been one of our most successful field trips. The area is well known for its birds of prey, which in past years have included Bald and Golden Eagles (the latter a good number of years ago). Crested Caracaras and White-tailed Hawks in addition to the more "expected" Red-tailed Hawks, Northern Harriers, and American Kestrels. In some years we have seen White-tailed Kites and Merlins.

Here in Southeast Texas, we have had a series of unusual weather periods over the last couple of years or so culminating in a significant drought that began in September this year.

The area is also well known as the wintering ground of what has become a large (about 1,000 strong most years) flock of Sandhill Cranes and most winters is one of the best places to see the winter-

ing sparrows of several different species. Both cranes and sparrows are omnivorous, but depend on seeds and roots in fall and winter.

This is certainly a strong El Niño year, but when the rains it causes in Southeast Texas start is somewhat variable. Depending on whether we experience any heavy rain early enough in October, there may be flooded fields, that may attract ducks and geese, although the increasing areas used for crawfish forming typically attract only Great Egrets.

Meet at 8 a.m. at the intersection of FM365 and Johnson Road (on the "north/west" side of Johnson Road at that intersection). As this was written six weeks out, you are strongly advised to check on-line on the actual road situations, as there are sometimes additional closings on weekends. The FM 365 overpass over IH-10 is currently closed, so it is likely best to approach the area on IH 10 westbound to take FM 365 north at Exit 838. Northbound, shortly after you emerge out of the woodlands, South China Road goes to the right (east then north) and immediately afterwards, on the left, about 7 miles from IH-10. From the Beaumont area, it may be better to use US 90 to take FM 365 south at Nome. This latter plan will keep you well clear of the construction areas. If you approach from the north, Johnson Road is about 7.5 miles south of US 90 on FM365. This will be largely a "car birding" trip, car-pooling desired. There is space to leave cars clear of the paved surface at the intersection of FM365 and Johnson Road.

Note that there are no toilet facilities anywhere close to the meeting point, so visiting the convenience stores on US 90 at FM 365 (Big D's) or the Stuckey's on the northside of IH 10 at the FM365 exit is advised. The trip typically finished at Big D's although there are several places to eat in Winnie, which is about 8 miles south of FM 365 on FM 1406.

We do not meet in December. We do not yet have details of the various area Christmas Counts, but we will as soon as possible post the dates and details on the website at www.GoldenTriangleAudubon.org. and will list them in the December *Brown*

Pelican. The count period runs Dec 14th to Jan 5th every year. We expect that we will run counts in Orange County, as well as the Big Thicket Counts, Turkey Creek count centered north of Kountze and the Beech Creek count covering much of Steinhagen Lake.

Membership Dues

To simplify our record keeping, all memberships now run from January through December. Membership dues are \$20 per year. We are now accepting 2026 dues. You may pay at any membership meeting (checks preferred) or use the subscription/membership blank on the back page. Dues paid in September or will cover through the end of 2027.

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 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 bring them to our attention and we do not receive any rebate.

We would very much encourage you receive the Brown Pelican electronically as this saves paper, cost (including ever increasing postal costs) and volunteer time. To start that, simply send an email to gtaudubon@aol.com from the address you want us to use.



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

Field Trip to Smith Point Hawk Watch – 26 September 2026

The Smith Point Hawk Watch is always hit or miss even during the peak of fall migration but some days are more disappointing than others. The day for the 2026 Golden Triangle Audubon trip to Smith Point checked all the right boxes for a big hawk day. Several days of north wing preceding the day? Check. Some clouds to make the birds easier to see? Check. Lots of hawks on the day before the trip? Check. But sometimes you can check all of the right boxes and the birds still do not cooperate.

The day started as a pleasant one. There was a little light rain in the area and the clouds helped keep it a bit cooler than a typical September day in southeast Texas. Approximately a dozen Golden Triangle birders made the trip out to Candy Abshier Wildlife Management Area at Smith Point in Chambers County, the premier hawk watching destination on the upper Texas coast. The geography of this location funnels migrating hawk to this point in the fall giving birders great opportunities for observing these birds. The Broad-winged Hawk migration in particular is impressive with some days featuring thousands of migrating hawks. Fall fronts with north winds tend to push migrants down to the coast with migrating hawks often lagging a day or two behind the leading edge of the front. That was pretty much exactly the set up for the field trip day so would the hawks show up?

Accipiters (Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks) do not rely of thermals for migration like many soaring hawks do so they tend to be active earlier in the day. It was not a good sign for the group when there were very few Accipiters moving around the oak mottes at Smith Point early in the day. The birders satisfied themselves looking at an American Oystercatcher foraging on some rocks on the edge of the bay and watching Blue-gray Gnatcatcher move between the trees. A Red-bellied Woodpecker called from nearby and a Great Blue Heron was disturbed by something and lumbered into the sky. A Northern Cardinal called from a nearby thicket while a Belted Kingfisher chattered while hovering over the water. But where were the hawks?

As the morning progressed and the day heated up, thermals began to form and the group saw its first flock of soaring birds – Anhingas! These diving birds migrant in large numbers along the Texas coast just like hawks do. The Anhingas soared in elegant circles, climbing higher in the sky as they tried to decide whether to fly over the water toward LaPorte or the turn around and keep flying over land along the edge of the bay. Next, a few Mississippi Kites appeared. These were all first-year birds with streaked underparts that also soared on the forming thermals. Mississippi Kites eat mostly large insects like dragonflies and cicadas, catching them on the wing so they are graceful fliers. A few Broad-winged Hawks began to trickle in as well. Could this be the start of something big?

As the group waited for more hawks to show up, other birds were noted. A group of huge American White Pelicans soared far overhead while slightly less huge Brown Pelicans dove for prey in the bay. Caspian and Royal Terns were noted flying by along with the much more numerous Laughing Gulls. A probably Yellow Warbler was seen flitting along the tree line

while a White-eyed Vireo was heard calling by some of the birders. The fact that few migrant songbirds were seen among the trees was another sign that there might not be very many birds moving thorough the area on the day. Still, the birders noted Tree and Barn Swallows flying by and a Eurasian Collared-Dove perched on a nearby pole. A female Magnificent Frigatebird soared past the hawk tower. There are not many places to enjoy both kettles of migrating hawks and frigatebirds! Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are always to be found at Smith Point at this time of year and this year was no exception. The tiny birds constantly battled for position at the feeders set up on the hawk watch tower and perched in nearby trees much and entertained the assembled birders while they waited for hawks to fly over. Only Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were noted with none of the less common Rufous or other species that are sometimes noted. But when would the hawks show?

Well, some hawks did eventually show up. A few small kettles of Broad-winged Hawks were eventually spotted. Some of these were mixed with more Mississippi Kites. A beautiful White-tailed Kite was spotted flying nearby. It was not clear if this was a local bird or a migrant. A noisy Red-shouldered Hawk made a few passes through the area and perched up on a pole to give everyone good looks. An Osprey or two flew high overhead showing their distinct crook-winged silhouette. A tiny American Kestrel showed off its hunting prowess by catching a dragonfly and eating it on the wing. An adult Bald Eagle was an especially welcome sight and is made a couple of passes near the tower. This is likely one of the birds that nested near Smith Point and are still hanging around. But what of the hordes of migrating Broad-wings? Or a vagrant Hook-billed Kite or Short-tailed Hawk like the ones seen the previous day?

Alas, despite weather that seemed favorable, the large numbers of migrating raptors never materialized. It just goes to show that you can never predict these things with perfect accuracy. Even when conditions seem perfect, the birds do not always cooperate. But hope springs eternal and there is no doubt that the Golden Triangle Audubon members will show up to Smith Point again next year in late September to try again!

The following species were recorded by the trip leaders:

American White Pelican (25); Brown Pelican (20); Neotropic Cormorant (3); Anhinga (60); Magnificent Frigatebird (1); Great Blue Heron (1); Great Egret (1); White Ibis (65); Black Vulture (20); Turkey Vulture (12); Osprey (2); White-tailed Kite (1); Mississippi Kite (17); Bald Eagle (1); Sharp-shinned Hawk (3); Cooper's Hawk (3); Red-shouldered Hawk (1); Broad-winged hawk (15); American Kestrel (1); American Oystercatcher (1); Laughing Gull (30); Caspian Tern (1); Royal Tern (1); Eurasian Collared-Dove (1); White-winged Dove (2); Ruby-throated Hummingbird (30); Belted Kingfisher (1); Red-bellied Woodpecker (1); Eastern Wood-Pewee (1); White-eyed Vireo (1); Blue Jay (2); Tree Swallow (5); Barn Swallow (5); Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (15); Northern Mockingbird (1); Yellow Warbler (1); Northern Cardinal (2)

Steve Mayes

Birding the Changing Seasons – Passerine Migrant Species

This article was originally published in 1996, but with a few minor updates, is just as relevant today.

This article will cover later passerine migrants, a much more difficult task than covering the relatively short passage periods of spring migration. It is sometimes possible to find 25 or more species of warbler in a single day in the spring/ This does not happen in the fall! This account will take us up through the November switch over from migrants to winter residents.

While most migratory raptors are content to wait until September before embarking on their southward journey, Mississippi Kites move early. In mid-August, they will begin passing through our area. For most of August, they can be seen soaring over much of our area, feeding on the wing on their favorite food, dragonflies. At night, they roost in the trees. The locally breeding Swallow-tailed Kites, also leave the US mostly before the early part of September. They used to be highly sought by birders as they congregated in the relatively small area of the Trinity River bottoms along US 90 in Liberty County, but they have tended to spread out more in recent years.

Trying to summarize passerine fall migration is a very difficult task. Unlike in the spring when migration of almost all migrant species, but especially passerine species, are concentrated for the most part over the four weeks of April. In fall, most passerine (as the term is generally interpreted), migrants are content to stay on or near their breeding grounds for a variable time after the breeding season as long as favored food is readily available. That means that the migration windows can vary from year to year.

There are a few species where they are more summer residents than passage migrants to use an excellent and very descriptive term commonly used in Europe. The resource that we have used for more than 15 years *The Birder's Checklist of the Upper Texas Coast* was last updated in May 2008, and thus does not reflect changes that have occurred since then. While most of the changes reflect species moving into the area, as they expand their ranges, species no longer as easily found are more difficult to detect and categorize. However, it would be advantageous to have the migration windows depicted in the same graphical format used in the 2008 edition but it would be good to re-sequence the species in the currently favored taxonomic order. The internet has not completely eliminated the value of the old-fashioned printed checklist format, but the small print typically used in those checklists makes a cellphone presentation of them very difficult to read in the field.

We will in this article select species that are more obvious and more sought after in the fall. Purple Martins, which are passerines in the strict sense of the term, are among the earliest migrants to arrive in spring but also among the earliest to leave in the fall. Some remain all summer. In August, they are already gathering on wires, in some places in large numbers, in anticipation of departure for points south. Some do linger into September or occasionally October, in large gatherings, but the majority leave before then.

Trees Swallows are traditionally thought of as winter residents, although numbers are reduced between November and February. Northern Rough-winged Swallows on the other hand, exhibit clean spring and fall passage migration periods.

Genetically, Eastern Kingbirds and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers are considered by most to be very closely related, despite the obvious morphological differences, but like Purple Martins, a substantial part of the breeding population remains all summer in areas along the Gulf Coast. But Eastern Kingbirds are largely gone by the third week in September, while a very visible number of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers adorn many wires into the first week of November.

Most birders know that there appear to be a lot fewer warblers migrating through in the fall than in the spring, even allowing for the typically much wider windows for each species. A few species head south in the fall using a path that is dramatically further east of their spring path. The most dramatic is the Blackpoll Warbler many of which leave the northeast US and fly direct the 2,500 miles to the north coast of South America. Bay-breasted and Cerulean Warbler probably follow a similar flight path, as they are very rare in fall along the Texas coast.

Which migrant warblers do birders look for in August and onwards? Prairie Warbler is one of the first to come to mind. The species appears to be one of a relatively few that migrate in spring counter-clockwise from Florida and the Caribbean round as far as southeast Texas. Migrants are much easier to find in southeast Texas in early to mid-August. (Most birders see them on territory in May and June.) Louisiana Waterthrushes are also well known as early migrant in the fall. Northern Waterthrushes follow throughout September. September and on into October is the heart of fall warbler migration. October is when Magnolia Warblers and Chestnut-sided Warblers – very different in fall plumage from spring birds – Black-throated Green Warblers, Tennessee Warblers and American Redstarts are among the last to pass through. There are warblers with even wider migration windows -- Black-and-white Warbler is probably the archetypical example. There are a few warblers that winter in southeast Texas – Yellow-rumped Warblers being very well known as wintering birds, along with Orange-crowned, Palm and Wilson's Warblers

Migrant Vireos are few and far between until the wintering Blue-headed Vireos start showing up in mid-October. eBird data is not granular enough to determine much about the migration path(s) and exact timing, but one is led to wonder whether Swainson's. Warbling and Philadelphia Vireos all mostly migrate on easterly and westerly paths that avoid their having to cross the Gulf. The various buntings are mostly winter residents, although some, Indigo Bunting for example typically do not stay all winter.

Thrushes are not a species to look for in Southeast Texas in fall. eBird data suggests that the migration path in fall is significantly east of the spring path. A few thrushes, especially Wood Thrushes are seen in the fall, but the wintering Hermit Thrushes, which don't arrive in numbers until mid-November, the only true thrushes we see in the fall, and very late in the fall at that. Gray Catbirds are thrushes, and common fall migrants in October, although a few can usually be found throughout the winter.

Have Wings, May Travel

This column was first published in 1998 and is an interesting commentary on the bird population changes being noted at that time almost 30 years ago.

The factors influencing the increase and decrease in bird populations are not well understood. While it is easy to merely blame habitat loss, disturbance during the breeding season and other inevitable results of increased urbanization in many parts of the country, there are obviously many other unrecognized factors. Our last column under this title noted the eastward spread of the White-tailed Kite over the last ten or fifteen years. Although both Swainson's Hawks and Crested Caracaras are seen more frequently east of Houston than they used to, they are not spreading east at nearly the rate of the Kite. Identification of these trends is not easy. Bird distributions do not often stop abruptly (and when they do it is usually associated with a major physio-geographic barrier such as a mountain range, a large body of water, or a desert). Rather, bird densities drop off towards the edges of the "accepted" range. There will always be some "wanderers" outside the normal range, particularly in the immediate post-breeding time period. Only by very careful and tedious census techniques can changes in bird population densities be established unequivocally. The manpower and time required for such studies are rarely available. In any case, by the time enough data is available to draw conclusions, the less scientific evaluations based largely on reported sightings and/or Christmas Count data will have long ago convinced most birders of the change.

There does, however, appear to be a pattern in that the eastern boundary of the ranges of many "southwestern" (West Texas, New Mexico, Arizona) birds is extending further east and the northern limit of several "Valley" (Rio Grande Valley) birds is expanding northwards. This column will discuss several examples.

One timely example in Southeast Texas is the Least Grebe. The United States range of the Least Grebe was until very recently confined to a relatively small area of Texas from the Rio Grande to just south of Corpus Christi and inland 50 or 100 miles from the Gulf. Very rare "stragglers" were believed to reach the Upper Texas Coast (and southeast Arizona). In recent years, the species has been well established as being present in Attwater's Prairie Chicken NWR, and we now have what may well be a small breeding population in Tyrrell Park in Beaumont. The problems pesticides caused the Brown Pelican have been well publicized, and the recent spread of the species from the Corpus Christi area up along the entire Upper Texas Coast and on into southwestern Louisiana marks a recolonization of parts of the previous breeding range.

The Black-bellied Whistling-Duck is also clearly increasing in numbers on the upper coast. Traditionally considered a Valley resident, this attractive Duck is being seen in increasing numbers in southeast Texas. For a period, there was a small, very little publicized breeding population in Orange, Texas on Adams Bayou near Sabine Lake, but this apparently declined. There is now a thriving flock in Brazos Bend State Park southeast of Houston, and this winter about 200 are known to be resident in the J. D. Murphree WMA west of Port Arthur. For two or three years now, there have been sightings of this species in spring in Anahuac NWR and along the coast near Sea Rim, including some in the open pond in Sabine Woods. These may

have been part of, or have become part of this population.

An elusive species, the Masked Duck has over the last two years or so staged a remarkable expansion into Texas, with birds now being reported regularly between Kingsville and the Valley proper. But the most famous examples of the species are those in Brazos Bend SP, which are (now, at least) not nearly as shy as most of the species, and have cooperated by confining themselves to a relatively small area of Pilant Lake near the observation tower and trail. There have also been sightings in the greater Freeport area and in Anahuac, those in the latter extending back over a number of years. About two years ago, a relatively large number were reported in an all but inaccessible part of McFaddin NWR on the coast west of Sea Rim. These birds like Spartina (Cordgrass), especially where there is also some open water with surface vegetation. Keep your eyes peeled in Cattail Marsh, on Shoveler Pond in Anahuac, and on the marsh edges on Pleasure Island But perhaps the news is not all good. Black-necked Stilts were rare on the Upper Texas Coast, more especially in winter, until 15 or 20 years ago, when they advanced up the coast. We have enjoyed seeing such large numbers that we have recently perhaps taken them for granted. Although still very evident, the numbers of Stilts have seemingly slowly declined in Jefferson County over the last two or three years. It is too early to call it a trend, but the situation will bear careful monitoring over the next couple of years.

Increases in population are being reported elsewhere. Inca Doves spread into our area about ten or so years ago from the west. The rate of eastward movement of the species has been relatively slow, and they still have not progressed much further east than Lake Charles. Look for the White-winged Dove to follow. The small population which existed in the Courthouse Square in Galveston for a number of years has multiplied, and there are now hundreds in downtown Galveston, and others have spread out to the west part of Galveston Island. As an obvious eastward range expansion, they are now seen regularly in the Smith Point area, and are reported from time to time at Anahuac NWR, in High Island, and on the coast near Sabine Pass. There is a sizeable flock in Cameron Parish in southwest Louisiana. Nothing has been more spectacular than the increase in the reports of wintering "western" hummingbirds along the upper Texas and Louisiana coasts eastward to New Orleans and beyond to Alabama. The variety of hummingbirds seen on the Freeport Christmas Count has been astonishing for several years. Now, reports of wintering Broad-tailed and Calliope Hummingbirds (in particular) are commonplace in Baton Rouge and New Orleans. It is not entirely clear whether there has been an increase in the numbers of these species wintering or whether more people have maintained feeders through the winter and thus are seeing birds they might not otherwise have. Perhaps many wintering immature and female birds have hitherto been assumed to be Rufous Hummingbirds without careful evaluation.

Nevertheless, it is increasingly clear that the pattern of a few western birds heading east or south east for the winter is more accentuated in the hummingbirds, although there are other species in which there is a similar pattern of vagrancy.

Bird Sightings –September 2026

For this column, we review, looking for rare and very rare species, all credible eBird and other records reported to us from nearby Texas counties – 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 reported it.

Unfortunately, we lost some of the eBird rare bird reports for the first part of September, although there were not a lot of

them. While the reports are still in eBird, we cannot selectively retrieve them after about 10 days! Even without this problem, it is reasonable clear that September was not the most exciting month. It is not clear whether the hot dry conditions had something to do with the relative lack of rarities.

We would welcome feedback on whether the criteria that we are using to select the sightings that we show in this column are providing the results that you would like. For the "real" rarities – birds that are rare at any time during the year -- there is no difficulty in selecting what to include. But about a year ago, we changed to include species that are present for part of the year in southeast Texas only if they were at least two weeks "early" or two weeks "late" rather than only one week "out of season." This cut the number of reports we include, but, from where we stand, it did not exclude many reports that most birders would want to see.

Local Counties September 2026

No rarities reported meeting the criteria we use.

Nearby Counties September 2026

Snow Goose	Sep 1 on GAL-Bliss Meadows Park Pasadena (1) continuing
Ross's Goose	Sep 1 on HAS-Copper Lakes Park (1) continuing
Egyptian Goose	Sep 30 LIB-Cleveland CR3247 (2) Kevin Jackson
Cinnamon Teal	Sep 29 CHA-Jocelyn Nungaray NWR (1) Lisa Hardcastle
Common Ground-Dove	Sep 29 HAS-Bear Creek Park (1) Doug Fishamn, Drew Dickert (1)
Groove-billed Ani	Sep 26-27 GAL-Settegast Rd (4) Patrick Higgins, mult obs
Black-billed Cuckoo	Sep 26 HAS-Houston Arboretum (1) Alex and Amanda SM
Allen's Hummingbird	Sep 25-30 HAS-John Paul Landing Park area (1) mult obs
Broad-tail.Humm'bird	Sep 27 HAS-Memorial Park, Pasadena (1) Lauren Helling
Lsr Black-backed Gull	Sep 30 CHA-Gulf Beach (1) WE
California Gull	Sep 30 GAL-Texas City Dike (1) Mike Austin
Common Loon	Sep 28 NEW-Toledo Bend Dam (21) WE
Hook-billed Kite	Sep 25 CHA-Smith Point Hawk Watch (1) Susan Heath, Rebecca Bracken
Short-tailed Hawk	Sep 25 CHA-Smith Point Hawk Watch (1)
Ash-thr. Flycatcher	Sep 26 HAS-Rice Univ (1) HAS-Andrea Lisi, mult obs
Gt Crested Flycatcher	Sep 25 CAL-Lake Charles (1) Deanna Griggs
Western Wood-Pewee	Sep 27 GAL-Homrighaus Rd (1) Isaac Boden
Willow Flycatcher	Sep 27 GAL-Lafitte's Cove (1) Todd McGrath

	Sep 27 GAL-Settegast Rd (1) Todd McGrath
	Sep 30 GAL-Corps Woods (1) Schyler Brown
Say's Phoebe	Sep 25-27 GAL-Homrighaus Rd (1) Keith Alderman, Richard Liebler, mult obs
Western Kingbird	Sep 28 CAM-Deep Bayou Rd (1) Charlotte Chehotsky
Bewick's Wren	Sep 25 HAS-Warren Ranch Lake area- (1) Stann Starling
Bullock's Oriole	Sep 25 CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Jim Holmes
	Sep 26 HAS-Armand Bayou NC (1) Andrew Hamlett, Richard Rulander, Wen Li
Scaly-breasted Munia	Sep 25 GAL-League City (1) Alicia Watt
Chipping Sparrow	Sep 25 CAL-Lake Charles (1) Deanna Griggs
Lark Sparrow	Sep 24-29 CAL-Lake Charles (3) Charlotte Chehotsky, Deanna Griggs
Mourning Warbler	Sep 28 CAM-Peveto Woods (1) Charlotte Chehotsky
Cape May Warbler	Sep 28, 30 CAM-Peveto Woods (10) Charlotte Chehotsky
	Sep 30 GAL-Lafitte's Grove (1) Paul Sivon
Golden-wing.Warbler	Sep 30 HAS-Russ Pitman Park (1) mult obs
Prothonotary Warbler	Sep 30 HAS-S of Edith Moor Sanctuary(1) Joseph Stephens

Abbreviations used: ANG – Angelina County;; CAL – Calcasieu Parish, LA; CAM – Cameron Parish, LA; CHA – Chambers County; GAL – Galveston County; HAI – Hardin County; HAS – Harris County; HI – High Island; JAS – Jasper County; JAW – John Whittle; JEF – Jefferson County; LIB – Liberty County; NEW – Newton County; ORA – Orange County; PI – Pleasure Island, Port Arthur; SAA – San Augustine County. SAB – Sabine County; SM – Steve Mayes, SRSP - Sea Rim State Park; SW – Sabine Woods; TP – Tyrrell Park including Cattail Marsh; TYL – Tyler County; WE – Wyatt Egelhoff; WJC – West Jefferson County.

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

FIRST CLASS MAIL

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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.

Many rare bird sightings in Texas are posted on Facebook Texbirds or on the TEXTBIRDS listserv. Archives of the listserv are at www.freelists.org/archive/texbirds. It is not necessary to subscribe 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.