



## TEXAS COAST MIGRATION SPECTACLE II 2013

Apr 20, 2013 to Apr 26, 2013  
John Coons & Lena Senko

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).*



*The expansive sandy beaches of Bolivar Flats are home to numerous species of terns and shorebirds. (Photo by guide Lena Senko)*

What a rewarding week we had in East Texas! We started off our birding adventure in the Piney Woods and Big Thicket, then worked our way to the coast and awesome migrant trap of High Island. A little bit of waiting at Jones State Forest rewarded us with the endangered and highly sought-after Red-cockaded Woodpecker, which peeked out of its cavity for us whilst colorful Red-headed Woodpeckers flew about nearby and Brown-headed Nuthatches shimmied their way through the treetops. The bottomland forests of the Big Thicket yielded many colorful and wonderfully vocal warblers: Northern Parula, Kentucky, Prothonotary, Hooded, Pine, Prairie, and Yellow-throated. We spent the evening transfixed by the loud booming of a Barred Owl perched right above our heads. And all this only on the first day!

Day two brought the challenge of locating a Bachman's Sparrow, which proved elusive at first. But as all birders know, perseverance often pays off richly, and so it did for us when we had amazing scope looks at a Bachman's singing from a low shrub at Angelina National Forest. Our success with the sparrow was followed by an equal highlight of a stunning Swainson's Warbler perching out in the open. When we entered the woods at High Island later in the day, we got our first taste of a migrant feast: grosbeaks, tanagers, orioles, and a few warblers and thrushes, including a pretty male Painted Bunting and Black-billed Cuckoo.

The next three days we scoured the local landscape, from Anahuac Wildlife Refuge and the Bolivar Peninsula to woods and flooded rice fields, as we searched for both residents and migrants. In and around Anahuac, we were treated to close looks at such niceties as American Bittern, Seaside Sparrow, Sedge Wren, King and Clapper rails, and the unexpected surprise of a vagrant Ruff as the cherry on top. Now that's some ruff birding :). The Bolivar Peninsula wasn't too shabby either, giving us Snowy, Piping, and Wilson's plovers on the beaches, as well as many terns, avocets, stilts, American Oystercatchers, Red Knots, and Ruddy Turnstones. Along the peninsula's roads, we spotted Nelson's Sparrow, Crested Caracara, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, American Golden-Plover, and Long-billed Curlew. Later, we visited a flooded rice field that was rich with Pectoral and Stilt sandpipers, Wilson's Phalaropes, and gorgeous Hudsonian Godwits.

In the afternoons we headed to Boy Scout Woods and Smith Oaks on High Island in search of migrants. Fortunately for us (though perhaps not for the birds), the weather took a turn for the cold and drizzly for a couple of days due to northerly winds, which is exactly the kind of scenario conducive to fantastic birding. In this regard, the woods did not disappoint. We had fall-outs of copious Tennessee Warblers, Red-eyed Vireos, Swainson's Thrushes, and Scarlet Tanagers in the kinds of numbers most of us are usually not used to seeing in any one place. The great Live Oak trees often teemed with warblers such as Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Bay-breasted, Golden-winged, and Magnolia and occasionally revealed particularly desired species like Cerulean Warbler and Philadelphia Vireo. An out-of-range Western Tanager and Lesser Nighthawk were neat surprises, too. Finally, the rookery at Smith Oaks was a-croak with loud and gaudy nesting herons, cormorants, and spoonbills who put on quite the colorful show for us with their vibrant soft parts and elegant breeding plumes.

Everything from the local cuisine and hospitality to the smorgasbord of birds and a sprinkling of swamp rabbits and alligators made for a tremendously fun tour. John and I enjoyed birding with each and every one of you, and we certainly look forward to seeing you in the field again someday!

--Lena Senko

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

## BIRDS

### Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

**BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK** (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) – Our first looks were at a couple snoozing at the sewage ponds.

**FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCK** (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) – Such a debonair duck! We enjoyed great looks at these charismatic birds throughout.

**WOOD DUCK** (*Aix sponsa*) – A couple flew over our heads while we were keeping an eye on the Red-cockaded Woodpecker hole at Jones State Forest. We saw two more on the last day at Charlotte Lake.

**MOTTLED DUCK** (*Anas fulvigula*)

**BLUE-WINGED TEAL** (*Anas discors*) – A very common dabbler on High Island, but who could ever get bored of this sharp-looking bird?

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Anas clypeata*)

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN)** (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) – One seen far out at Anahuac, his white side stripe and pale undertail streak standing out even at a distance.

### Podicipedidae (Grebes)

**PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*)

### Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

**NEOTROPIC CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) – This is the common cormorant throughout.

**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – We saw a sprinkling of ‘em here and there. Told from Neotropic by larger size, shorter tail, and extensive orange facial skin. Juveniles have a very pale breast that stands out in contrast to the rest of the bird, unlike Neotropic juvies who usually have a dark brown breast.

### Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

**AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)

**BROWN PELICAN** (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – At Rollover Pass we saw rafts of hundreds!

### Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

**AMERICAN BITTERN** (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) – After seeing two distant individuals in the marsh grass at Skillern Tract, we had looks at two close birds at Anahuac. They were right by the road... so close that we could have reached out and touched them! Mindful birders that we are, we took a plethora of pictures instead.

**GREAT BLUE HERON** (*Ardea herodias*)

**GREAT EGRET** (*Ardea alba*)

**SNOWY EGRET** (*Egretta thula*)

**LITTLE BLUE HERON** (*Egretta caerulea*)

**TRICOLORED HERON** (*Egretta tricolor*)

**REDDISH EGRET** (*Egretta rufescens*) – We had the white morph of this species at Rollover Pass. Its bicolored pink-and-black bill sinched this bird’s ID.

**CATTLE EGRET** (*Bubulcus ibis*) – A very common sight, unsurprisingly especially around cattle.

**GREEN HERON** (*Butorides virescens*)

**BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) – We saw a close juvenile on our way to the rookery at Smith Woods. There were six more birds, including a nice adult, in the distant trees behind the rookery as well.

**YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON** (*Nyctanassa violacea*)

### Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

**WHITE IBIS** (*Eudocimus albus*)

**WHITE-FACED IBIS** (*Plegadis chihi*)

**ROSEATE SPOONBILL** (*Platalea ajaja*) – Question: What color is a spoonbill's tail? Answer: Pale pink in nonbreeding birds and a vibrant salmon-orange in breeders like the ones we saw in their resplendent glory at the rookery.

### Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

**BLACK VULTURE** (*Coragyps atratus*)

**TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*)

### Pandionidae (Osprey)

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*) – One flew over our heads at the Beumont wastewater treatment plant, but we saw six more at Lake Charlotte, including one who put on an entertaining diving show for us.

### Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

**WHITE-TAILED KITE** (*Elanus leucurus*) – We had close looks at a couple of these elegant kites along the Bolivar Peninsula road. One actually “kited” for us in the cold North wind.

**MISSISSIPPI KITE** (*Ictinia mississippiensis*) – Several of these sleek migrants circled nicely overhead while we searched for warblers at the Trinity River.

**NORTHERN HARRIER** (*Circus cyaneus*) – Seen swooping low over the marsh and coastal prairie every time we were at Anahuac.

**COOPER'S HAWK** (*Accipiter cooperii*) – We caught a brief look at a flyby individual on one of our drives around High Island.

**BROAD-WINGED HAWK** (*Buteo platypterus*) – Our closest looks were of juveniles in the Big Thicket, but we also saw migrants passing overhead on two other days at High Island.

**SWAINSON'S HAWK** (*Buteo swainsoni*) – We couldn't have been more spoiled with the superb looks we had at both perched and soaring individuals. A striking raptor indeed!

**RED-TAILED HAWK** (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

*Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)*

**CLAPPER RAIL** (*Rallus longirostris*) – At least three individuals gave us great, close views.

**KING RAIL** (*Rallus elegans*) – Two walked along the edge of a pond at Anahuac, giving us good studies of their warm, rufous plumage.

**SORA** (*Porzana carolina*) – At Anahuac, a brief show by one while another was heard.

**PURPLE GALLINULE** (*Porphyrio martinicus*) – On our drive through Anahuac, we had ample looks at several of these gorgeous gallinules walking through the reeds on their long, yellow toes.

**COMMON GALLINULE** (*Gallinula galeata*)

**AMERICAN COOT** (*Fulica americana*)

*Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)*

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – A common find at mudflats, park fields, or beach sides (take your pick!).

**AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER** (*Pluvialis dominica*) – We had several running around on the grass at Fort Travis.

**SNOWY PLOVER** (*Charadrius nivosus*) – Hurrah to Bolivar Flats for bequeathing us this precious little plover on our penultimate day!

**WILSON'S PLOVER** (*Charadrius wilsonia*) – This thick-billed plover was fairly common on the beaches of the Bolivar Peninsula.

**SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*)

**PIPING PLOVER** (*Charadrius melodus*) – All populations of this pale shorebird are either endangered or threatened due to human disturbance. We saw them in the habitat they love: open, sandy beaches.

**KILLDEER** (*Charadrius vociferus*)

*Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)*

**AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER** (*Haematopus palliatus*)

*Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)*

**BLACK-NECKED STILT** (*Himantopus mexicanus*)

**AMERICAN AVOCET** (*Recurvirostra americana*)

*Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)*

**SPOTTED SANDPIPER** (*Actitis macularius*)

**GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*)

**WILLET** (*Tringa semipalmata*)

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa flavipes*)

**UPLAND SANDPIPER** (*Bartramia longicauda*) – We found one nestled in the grass along the road on our way back from the flooded fields on the last day. He stayed put long enough for all to get a good look, then took off for the sky on wavering wings.

**WHIMBREL** (*Numenius phaeopus*)

**LONG-BILLED CURLEW** (*Numenius americanus*) – This curlew is uncommon and hard to get given the time of year. But we were able to snag one loiterer tucked away in the marsh vegetation on the Bolivar Peninsula.

**HUDSONIAN GODWIT** (*Limosa haemastica*) – What a striking shorebird! We had not one or two but eight of these impressive godwits in the flooded rice fields on our last day. Stellar looks through the scope, too.

**MARbled GODWIT** (*Limosa fedoa*)

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – "How's this for striking shorebird plumage?", the breeding turnstone seems to say.

**RED KNOT** (*Calidris canutus*) – While it was getting a tad late for knots to be around, we nevertheless had about twenty on Bolivar Flats.

**SANDERLING** (*Calidris alba*) – A common sight on every beachy site we visited.

**SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER** (*Calidris pusilla*)

**LEAST SANDPIPER** (*Calidris minutilla*)

**WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER** (*Calidris fuscicollis*) – At least one was walking about in the flooded rice fields on our last day. Long primary projection and streaky flanks on this species are the best clues to its ID.

**BAIRD'S SANDPIPER** (*Calidris bairdii*) – Anahuac NWR yielded several of these peeps.

**PECTORAL SANDPIPER** (*Calidris melanotos*) – A common shorebird which was quite abundant at both the Beaumont water treatment plant and the flooded rice fields.

**DUNLIN** (*Calidris alpina*)

**STILT SANDPIPER** (*Calidris himantopus*) – A sharp-looking sandpiper with a pretty rufous cheek patch and rusty crown in breeding plumage.

**BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER** (*Tryngites subruficollis*) – Our first great looks were of three birds on the lawn at Fort Travis but we had more at the rice fields as well.

**RUFF** (*Philomachus pugnax*) – This vagrant from Eurasia was definitely a highlight for many! We had an adult male in smooth gray, non-breeding plumage actively feeding close to the road at Anahuac.

**SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus griseus*)

**LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*)

**WILSON'S PHALAROPE** (*Phalaropus tricolor*) – A flock of a dozen was a nice sight at the flooded rice fields.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

**LAUGHING GULL** (*Leucophaeus atricilla*)

**RING-BILLED GULL** (*Larus delawarensis*)

**HERRING GULL (AMERICAN)** (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*)

**LEAST TERN** (*Sternula antillarum*) – Such a cute, diminutive tern.

**GULL-BILLED TERN** (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) – It was nice to see a couple or so at several locations.

**CASPIAN TERN** (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – A few were sprinkled in among the much more abundant Royal Terns at Rollover Pass.

**BLACK TERN** (*Chlidonias niger*) – At one point we had a small flock of these uncommon migrants through Texas.

**COMMON TERN** (*Sterna hirundo*)

**FORSTER'S TERN** (*Sterna forsteri*)

**ROYAL TERN** (*Thalasseus maximus*) – A very abundant breeding tern.

**SANDWICH TERN** (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*) – The tip of the bill of this species looks like it was dipped in mustard...

**BLACK SKIMMER** (*Rynchops niger*) – We had huge groups of them at a couple of locations on the Bolivar Peninsula.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) [I]

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia decaocto*) [II]

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE** (*Zenaida asiatica*) – We heard two on day two but later saw a couple at High Island.

**MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaida macroura*)

**INCA DOVE** (*Columbina inca*) – Half a dozen or so regularly patrolled the parking lot at High Island.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

**YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus americanus*) – We had, perhaps, a total of 10-15 individuals for the whole trip. These cuckoos were frequently encountered at caterpillar nests on our walks around Smith Oaks and Boy Scout Woods on High Island.

**BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO** (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*) – An uncommon and desirable migrant, we got lucky in seeing one at High Island two days in a row.

Strigidae (Owls)

**GREAT HORNED OWL** (*Bubo virginianus*) – We had great looks at an adult roosting beneath a bridge on our last day.

**BARRED OWL** (*Strix varia*) – While we were in the Piney Woods on the first day, we decided to try for this bird at a little cul-de-sac by a lake and got incredibly lucky. We saw a distant fledgling across the lake but a little while later were treated to spectacular views of an adult who sat and sang in a booming voice right over our heads! We watched him until the light faded completely and his outline was almost impossible to make out. Wow, he put on quite the show - what a breath stopper.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

**LESSER NIGHTHAWK** (*Chordeiles acutipennis*) – This bird was certainly a treat. What was he doing roosting in High Island, this common resident of Southwestern deserts and brushlands? Who knows, but we'll take him! The primary bar that went slightly past the tertials and the buffy bars at the base of the primaries were some good tell-tale signs of this species.

**COMMON NIGHTHAWK** (*Chordeiles minor*) – Seen often on perches in and around Anahuac.

**CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW** (*Antrostomus carolinensis*) – Heard far away in the distance on our first night as we were admiring our close Barred Owl. [\*]

Apodidae (Swifts)

**CHIMNEY SWIFT** (*Chaetura pelagica*)

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

**RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD** (*Archilochus colubris*)

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

**RED-HEADED WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) – We had especially rewarding looks at this striking woodpecker at Jones State Forest, where they were quite active.

**RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes carolinus*) [\*]

**DOWNY WOODPECKER** (*Picoides pubescens*)

**RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER** (*Picoides borealis*) – The hesitant individual we watched at Jones State Forest kept poking its head in and out of its nest cavity. While it never fully emerged, we all got great looks at its distinctive facial pattern and bright white cheek patch. This U.S. endemic is strictly dependant on mature Longleaf Pine forests, the destruction of which has led to the woodpecker becoming listed as an endangered species.

**PILEATED WOODPECKER** (*Dryocopus pileatus*) – We saw one at Jones State Forest and another at the Trinity River on the first day. Thereafter, we heard a couple more, but our best looks of the trip were undoubtedly on day one.

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

**CRESTED CARACARA** (*Caracara cheriway*) – The official “comedic relief bird” of the trip. While we were all working hard to get looks at a distant juvenile caracara across the river, Peggy happened to turn around and see an adult perched right behind us on a telephone pole! We savored our close views of this charismatic and colorful falcon, while chuckling heartily at our crazy luck.

**AMERICAN KESTREL** (*Falco sparverius*) – The one male we saw in the Big Thicket was a great find, since kestrels are usually found in southeast Texas only in the winter.

**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*) – Sheri's sharp eyes spotted us one striking, large female perched in low bushes by the side of the road. When our vehicles began approaching her, she flew to the middle of an adjacent farm field, where she sat on the ground for a while and gave us great

scope looks. A Gull-billed Tern mobbed her a few times but she held her ground, unscathed.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

**EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE** (*Contopus virens*) – Seen well around the water drip a few times.

**ACADIAN FLYCATCHER** (*Empidonax virescens*) – We had several at Smith Oaks on our last day.

**GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER** (*Myiarchus crinitus*)

**EASTERN KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus tyrannus*) – Definitely a common kingbird on this tour.

**SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** (*Tyrannus forficatus*) – Fortunately this show-off of a flycatcher isn't difficult to find... we saw them often on our drives (usually sitting on fences along the road). In fact, we saw our first Scissor-tailed of the trip unabashedly perched on a McDonald's entrance sign!

Laniidae (Shrikes)

**LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE** (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – There weren't too many loggerheads around, but we managed to pick up one or two every day.

Vireonidae (Vireos)

**WHITE-EYED VIREO** (*Vireo griseus*) – Its song was a common tune in our ears: "Chick-purweo-weo-chick!"

**YELLOW-THROATED VIREO** (*Vireo flavifrons*) – The woods of High Island yielded several of these bright-throated songsters.

**BLUE-HEADED VIREO** (*Vireo solitarius*)

**PHILADELPHIA VIREO** (*Vireo philadelphicus*) – Luckily, we got one on our way out of Smith Oaks on the fourth day (thanks to a friendly couple who pointed him out to us).

**RED-EYED VIREO** (*Vireo olivaceus*) – There was, without a doubt, a major fall-out of this species in Smith Oaks on day four. It seemed like every tree we looked in had a Red-eyed Vireo!

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

**BLUE JAY** (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – This was a bright and beautiful lifer for some.

**AMERICAN CROW** (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)

**FISH CROW** (*Corvus ossifragus*)

Alaudidae (Larks)

**HORNED LARK** (*Eremophila alpestris*) – We saw a couple walking along the sandy beach of Bolivar Flats. This is the only true lark native to North America.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

**NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW** (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*)

**PURPLE MARTIN** (*Progne subis*) – Great looks at the ones in a martin house when we had our picnic lunch in the Angelina National Forest.

**TREE SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta bicolor*)

**BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*)

**CLIFF SWALLOW** (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*)

Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)

**CAROLINA CHICKADEE** (*Poecile carolinensis*)

**TUFTED TITMOUSE** (*Baeolophus bicolor*)

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

**RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH** (*Sitta canadensis*) – It was a tad late for them to be around, but we heard a few at the start of the tour and later all saw one at our picnic spot in Smith Oaks on the last day.

**BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH** (*Sitta pusilla*) – With the exception of a small population in the Bahamas, this species is found almost exclusively in U.S. southeastern pine forests. We had a handful of these petite nuthatches on our first day in Jones State Forest.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

**SEDGE WREN** (*Cistothorus platensis*) – One perched up nicely for us at Anahuac.

**MARSH WREN** (*Cistothorus palustris*) – Strong, chilly winds kept this bubbly songster down and out of view in the dense marsh reeds. [\*]

**CAROLINA WREN** (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) – Oddly enough, though we heard his voice often, we never did lay eyes on him. [\*]

Poliophtilidae (Gnatcatchers)

**BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER** (*Poliophtila caerulea*)

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

**EASTERN BLUEBIRD** (*Sialia sialis*)

**VEERY** (*Catharus fuscescens*) – Some of us got on a close Veery at Boy Scout Woods on the last day.

**GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH** (*Catharus minimus*) – A couple showed themselves nicely by coming to the drip at Boy Scout Woods.

**SWAINSON'S THRUSH** (*Catharus ustulatus*) – These thrushes were downright abundant on our last day in High Island, no doubt due to a big flight that put down while we happened to be there.

**WOOD THRUSH** (*Hylocichla mustelina*) – This thrush's good looks are further accentuated by his lovely, flute-like song of "eeolay, eeolee".

**AMERICAN ROBIN** (*Turdus migratorius*) – Believe it or not, they're uncommon in southeast Texas, where they only winter, so seeing one was a pleasant surprise!

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

**GRAY CATBIRD** (*Dumetella carolinensis*)

**NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus polyglottos*)

**BROWN THRASHER** (*Toxostoma rufum*) – One particularly bold thrasher let us get our fill of looks and photos as he hopped around at the entrance to Boy Scout Woods.

*Sturnidae (Starlings)*

**EUROPEAN STARLING** (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

*Bombycillidae (Waxwings)*

**CEDAR WAXWING** (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – We saw a good number of these groovy, berry-eating specialists.

*Parulidae (New World Warblers)*

**OVENBIRD** (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – Our last day in Smith Woods was a fall-out day for Ovenbirds, and we tallied a total of about a dozen.

**WORM-EATING WARBLER** (*Helmitheros vermivorum*) – This slinky, secretive warbler did not show himself kindly to the entire group, but some were nevertheless able to snag glimpses of him stalking along the ground at Smith Oaks.

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH** (*Parkesia noveboracensis*) – One often hung out in the swampy area by the drip at Boy Scout Woods.

**BLUE-WINGED WARBLER** (*Vermivora cyanoptera*) – He briefly showed along a path to a couple of folks before making a hasty retreat. How impolite of him!

**GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER** (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) – One bright male gave us a nice show at High Island in a massive Live Oak tree.

**BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER** (*Mniotilta varia*) – We saw around twenty individuals of this infamous "nuthatch-like zebra warbler" on our last day... it was fun to see so many creeping about on the branches.

**PROTHONOTARY WARBLER** (*Protonotaria citrea*) – We had great looks at our first one at the Trinity River, where he sang his heart out for us. In the Roman Catholic Church, a prothonotary is a high-ranking member of the clergy who dons bright yellow robes (which is how the warbler got its name).

**SWAINSON'S WARBLER** (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*) – A warbler highlight of this trip indeed! We put great effort into seeking him out in the Big Thicket on the afternoon of the first day, to no avail. The trick was to return in the morning on the next day, when we not only heard him but saw every feather-twitch as he bravely perched out in the open, completely unobstructed, to the immense delight of all!

**TENNESSEE WARBLER** (*Oreothlypis peregrina*) – The most common warbler - the challenge became to "sift" through them sometimes to search out other species.

**KENTUCKY WARBLER** (*Geothlypis formosa*) – Our first and best looks were at the Trinity River, thanks to a lovely, vocal male.

**COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis trichas*)

**HOODED WARBLER** (*Setophaga citrina*) – Fairly common in the Big Thicket.

**AMERICAN REDSTART** (*Setophaga ruticilla*)

**CERULEAN WARBLER** (*Setophaga cerulea*) – This species is always high up there on birders' Warbler Wish Lists when they come to High Island. Thank you, Lynette, for spotting this handsome fellow!

**NORTHERN PARULA** (*Setophaga americana*) – Our only individual was at the Trinity River on the first day where he sang loudly but made us work to get looks by flying back and forth across the trail, hardly sitting still.

**MAGNOLIA WARBLER** (*Setophaga magnolia*) – We had three or so on our last day at High Island.

**BAY-BREASTED WARBLER** (*Setophaga castanea*) – There were a couple of these the last two days at the migrant areas. Lovely, lovely.

**BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER** (*Setophaga fusca*) – Same deal for this one as for the Bay-breasted. Now tell me - who on Earth could ever tire of seeing flaming orange against a backdrop of black and white??

**YELLOW WARBLER** (*Setophaga petechia*)

**CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER** (*Setophaga pensylvanica*) – We saw a bunch of these fancy-lookin' warblers on our last day. How kind of them to position themselves so close to the trail edges where we could really take in their colorful garb.

**BLACKPOLL WARBLER** (*Setophaga striata*) – I have always remembered this species as the "chickadee-like" warbler given that snazzy black cap. We had one on our last day.

**PINE WARBLER** (*Setophaga pinus*) – The plentiful warbler of the Big Thicket.

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER** (*Setophaga coronata*) – A couple bounced around in the trees of the Boy Scout Woods parking lot when we first got there on day two.

**YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER** (*Setophaga dominica*) – I think I'm speaking for all when I say that we couldn't get enough of this warbler and his gorgeous, cascading song at the shady bridge in the Big Thicket.

**PRAIRIE WARBLER** (*Setophaga discolor*) – We had super nice views of a couple at a pine plantation in the Big Thicket. One perched right by the road in the tippy-top of a pine, letting his buzzy, rising song spill forth into everyone's appreciative ears.

**BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER** (*Setophaga virens*)

**YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT** (*Icteria virens*) – Despite many attempts to stir it out of its hiding spots, this vocal skulker was resolute in remaining hidden. [\*]

*Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)*

**BACHMAN'S SPARROW** (*Peucaea aestivalis*) – I don't think we'll forget this sparrow very soon. We made a 2.5 hour trip north to the Angelina National Forest just for him! He took quite a while to locate, especially when he creeped around us in circles on the ground. Eventually, though, he perched on a scrawny bush and remained still enough for everyone to get very satisfying looks in the scope. What a beautiful sparrow... well-earned, too!

**CHIPPING SPARROW** (*Spizella passerina*)

**SAVANNAH SPARROW** (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)

**NELSON'S SPARROW** (*Ammodramus nelsoni*) – We had not one, not two, but FOUR perching side-by-side in a small bush.

**SEASIDE SPARROW** (*Ammodramus maritimus*) – Our frequent drives through Anahuac eventually rewarded us with looks at this dark, husky-

sounding sparrow. This species resides exclusively in or directly next to salt marshes of the eastern seaboard and Gulf Coast. The success of these songbirds often corresponds to the health of their fragile habitat, making them an excellent eco-indicator species.

**SWAMP SPARROW** (*Melospiza georgiana*) – A few were able to get on this guy.

**WHITE-THROATED SPARROW** (*Zonotrichia albicollis*)

#### Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

**SUMMER TANAGER** (*Piranga rubra*) – Plentiful at High Island.

**SCARLET TANAGER** (*Piranga olivacea*) – There was a tremendous fall-out of these birds on our last day at High Island. Our total was more than 100 for the day! We won't easily forget seeing a dozen glowing-red males sitting on the ground next to each other, gorging themselves on mulberries.

**WESTERN TANAGER** (*Piranga ludoviciana*) – The one male we had at Smith Oaks two days in a row was a treat, since he showed up beyond the normal range for this species.

**NORTHERN CARDINAL** (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)

**ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK** (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*)

**BLUE GROSBEAK** (*Passerina caerulea*) – We had one or two here and there.

**INDIGO BUNTING** (*Passerina cyanea*) – We saw many ranges of blue and brown in the male plumage of this bird.

**PAINTED BUNTING** (*Passerina ciris*) – Our best look was of the male who came to bathe at the water drip at Boy Scout Woods.

**DICKCISSEL** (*Spiza americana*) – We had nice looks at a bunch along the road driving around Anahuac and later on the Bolivar Peninsula.

#### Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

**RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD** (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

**EASTERN MEADOWLARK** (*Sturnella magna*)

**COMMON GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus quiscula*)

**BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus major*) – We got to compare this species to the Great-tailed very well at Anahuac. The dark iris and rounded crown of the head were tell-tale signs of the Boat-tailed.

**GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus mexicanus*)

**BRONZED COWBIRD** (*Molothrus aeneus*) – The male we saw perched on a telephone wire at Anahuac was proudly poofing out the bronzy ruff at the back of his neck. This is an uncommon though regular find in these parts.

**BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD** (*Molothrus ater*)

**ORCHARD ORIOLE** (*Icterus spurius*) – Plentiful at High Island.

**BALTIMORE ORIOLE** (*Icterus galbula*)

#### Fringillidae (Siskins, Crossbills, and Allies)

**HOUSE FINCH** (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) – One male flew over Lynette and me at Ebeniezer Park on our second day.

**PINE SISKIN** (*Spinus pinus*) – We had quite a few in the trees above the bridge in the Big Thicket. Rather unusual and uncommon for this time of year and location.

**AMERICAN GOLDFINCH** (*Spinus tristis*)

#### Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*)

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## MAMMALS

**EASTERN COTTONTAIL** (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) – We had one at Ebeniezer Park.

**SWAMP RABBIT** (*Sylvilagus aquaticus*) – The common rabbit at High Island.

**EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL** (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

**HOUSE MOUSE** (*Mus musculus*) – We had several scurrying about in the undergrowth on our last day.

**BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN** (*Tursiops truncatus*) – Some were able to see one at the Port Bolivar Ferry Landing.

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

In the Big Thicket we saw the pretty Green Anole (*Anolis carolinensis*) doing his dewlap display. We also had over a dozen American Alligators (*Alligator mississippiensis*) on our drives through Anahuac NWR, as well as a species of Woodrat (*Neotoma* sp.) at High Island.

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**Totals for the tour: 205 bird taxa and 5 mammal taxa**