

TEXAS APRIL 2003

The following is based on a trip to Texas undertaken by J.Duffie, M.Sidwell and myself in April 2003.

It is a very easy trip to arrange, with flights from Gatwick to Houston being fairly cheap (ca. £220), car hire is reasonable for a monster 3.5 litre gas guzzler (no problem as petrol is dirt cheap) and accommodation is both cheap and incredibly easy to find. With no language problems, a perfect infrastructure and loads of migrant birds the only problem with Texas are the inhabitants!

2nd April.

Arrived at Houston early afternoon and after a couple of unpleasant hours in Immigration and sorting out our hire car we were on our way. We decided to head straight to High Island as we had several hours of birding time. The journey provided fleeting views of what were to become familiar roadside birds, the highlights being a Yellow-crowned Night Heron in a culvert alongside J.F.K. Boulevard in Houston and a Swainson's Hawk over the car hire compound.

Boy Scout's Wood was fairly quiet during the last few hours of daylight with only a sprinkling of (apparently) common migrants, the highlight being a smart Prothonotary Warbler.

Night in the Gulfway Motel, High Island.

Houston-High Island:

Anhinga 5; Great Blue Heron 2; Great Egret; Snowy Egret; Tricoloured Heron; Little Blue Heron 5; Cattle Egret; Yellow-crowned Night Heron 1 ad; White Ibis; Roseate Spoonbill; Turkey Vulture; Osprey; Swainson's Hawk 2; American Kestrel; Killdeer; Willet; Mourning Dove; Chimney Swift; American Crow; Swallow; Tree Swallow; Cliff Swallow; Starling; Eastern Meadowlark; Brown-headed Cowbird; Common Grackle; Great-tailed Grackle; Boat-tailed Grackle; Red-winged Blackbird; Orchard Oriole 3; House Sparrow; Blue-winged Teal 200.

Boy Scout's Wood:

Green Heron 2; Inca Dove; Belted Kingfisher; Loggerhead Shrike; Red-eyed Vireo; White-eyed Vireo; Purple Martin; Ruby Crowned Kinglet 3; Hermit Thrush 2 Prothonotary Warbler 1; Orange-crowned Warbler; Northern Parula; Hooded Warbler; Summer Tanager 1; Lincoln's Sparrow; Northern Cardinal.

3rd April.

A short walk from the motel found us doing the rounds of B.S.W. This was again on the quiet side, the best bird being an immature Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. After a filling breakfast we headed along the Bolivar Peninsula to Bolivar Flats. The drive down produced our first smart White-tailed Kites and Crested Caracaras as well as some impressive Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, a bird which was to become a daily companion in good numbers. The flats themselves and the roadside pools yielded stunning views of a huge range of shorebirds (the Western Sands. around our feet were amazing) as well as 5 Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows in the nearby salt marsh. Just Up the road Rollover Pass produced more of the same, along with our first Neotropic Cormorants, Black Skimmers, Fulvous Whistling Duck, our only American Black Tern and a first-winter Lesser Black-backed Gull.

The afternoon was spent at the excellent Anahuac, where vast numbers of water birds were logged. The highlight here was a brief Yellow Rail, whilst an area of trees called The Willows held a few migrants including an obliging Blue-winged Warbler.

Night in the Gulfway Motel, High Island.

High Island:

White-winged Dove 1; Collared Dove 2; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 1stW; White-eyed Vireo; Blue Jay; Carolina Wren; House Wren; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Hermit Thrush; Wood Thrush; Northern Mockingbird; Brown Thrasher 3; Grey Catbird 3; Yellow-rumped Warbler 5; Swamp Sparrow.

Bolivar Flats:

Brown Pelican; White Pelican; Double-crested Cormorant; Great Blue, Tricoloured and Little Blue Herons; Red-breasted Merganser; Northern Harrier; White-tailed Kite 2; Crested Caracara 2; Peregrine; Semi-palmated, Wilson's, Snowy, Piping and Grey Plovers; American Oystercatcher 2; American Avocet ca. 5000; Black-necked Stilt; Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs; Willet; Long-billed Curlew; Hudsonian Whimbrel, Marbled Godwit 3; Turnstone; Western, Semi-palmated, Least and Pectoral Sandpipers; Sanderling; Dunlin; Short-billed Dowitcher; Wilson's Snipe; Laughing, Bonaparte's, Ring-billed and American Herring Gulls, Caspian, Royal, Sandwich, Forster's, Least and Gull-billed Terns, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Horned Lark 10; Northern Rough-winged Swallow; Sedge Wren; Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow 5+; Savannah Sparrow.

Rollover Pass:

Reddish Egret; Fulvous Whistling Duck; Gadwall; American Wigeon; Shoveller; Bonaparte's Gull 19; Lesser Black-backed Gull: 1st. W; American Black Tern Ad. W.; Black Skimmer. Neotropic Cormorant 18.

Anahuac:

Pied-billed Grebe; American Bittern 4; Great Blue Heron; Black-crowned Night Heron 3+; Yellow-crowned Night Heron 2; White-faced Ibis 50+; Fulvous Whistling Duck 18; Mottled Duck 5; Blue and Green-winged Teals; Northern Harrier; American Kestrel; Peregrine 2; Yellow Rail 1; Moorhen; American Coot; American Oystercatcher; American Avocet; Wilson's Phalarope; Dowitchers : many present, the majority seemed to be Long-billed although some Short-billed were seen; Belted kingfisher; Eastern Kingbird 11; Scissor-tailed Flycatcher; Marsh Wren; Blue-grey Gnatcatcher; Yellow-rumped Warbler; Hooded Warbler; Blue-winged Warbler; Common Yellowthroat; Swamp Sparrow; Savannah Sparrow.

4th April

The by now standard early morning walk around B.S.W only added Cooper's Hawk and White-crowned Sparrow, so after breakfast we began the long drive South on the Texas 35. Regular bop stops produced Red-tailed, Red-shouldered and Swainson's Hawks, American Kestrel, Bald Eagle and our first Black Vultures amongst numerous Turkeys.

A mid-afternoon arrival at a hot Aransas saw the fine Buff-bellied Hummingbird instantly bagged (despite a claim from the info. centre that there were none around) and 2 mid-range Whooping Cranes soon after from the tower. The rest of the afternoon spent here was fairly unproductive, the highlights being ca. 20 Black-bellied Whistling Ducks and a (not so) Wild Turkey. Some dusk birding here revealed several Common Nighthawks, but was cut short by ridiculous swarms of insects.

We spent the night at Fulton, taking in a Great Horned Owl on the roadside nearby.

High Island:

Inca Dove; Ruby-crowned Kinglet 5; Orange-crowned Warbler 1; Hermit Thrush 2; White-throated Sparrow 3; White-crowned Sparrow 1; Cooper's Hawk 1 over; Grey Catbird; Brown Thrasher; Wood Thrush 1; Ruby-throated Hummingbird 2; Yellow-rumped Warbler 3.

Bolivar Peninsula:

White-tailed Kite 5; Scissor-tailed Flycatcher 3; Northern Harrier 1; Belted Kingfisher; Neotropic Cormorant 8; Double-crested Cormorant; Bonaparte's, American Herring, Laughing and Ring-billed Gulls.

Texas 35 South.

Red-tailed Hawk 2; Turkey Vulture; American Kestrel 1; Swainson's Hawk 1; Cliff Swallow; Bald Eagle ad.; Red-shouldered Hawk 1; Black Vulture 25+; Crested Caracara.

Aransas:

Buff-bellied Hummingbird 1; Whooping Crane 2 ads.; Northern Harrier 2; Little Blue Heron 30+; Sora 1; Common Yellowthroat; Pied-billed Grebe 5; Black-bellied Whistling Duck 20+. Blue and Green-winged Teals, American Bittern 1; Wild Turkey 1; Solitary (1), Pectoral(50+), Stilt(15); Least(19) and Semi-palmated(1) Sandpipers; Dowitcher sp. 10; Black-necked Stilt 11; Wilson's Phalarope 20; Wilson's Snipe 5; Willet 3; Mottled Duck 3; Northern Rough-winged Swallow 7; Black-crowned Night Heron 2; Common Nighthawk 2+.

Fulton:

Great Horned Owl 1.

5th April

Our first port of call this morning was Pollywog Ponds near Corpus Christi, bagging our first Golden-fronted Woodpeckers on the way. The ponds themselves yielded at least 6 Least Grebes with young, with the surrounding trees containing Couch's Kingbirds and a good range of migrants including Indigo Buntings and both Warbling and Blue-headed Vireos. The culvert adjacent to the entrance contained a colony of over 30 Cave Swallows giving mega views. Driving south on the Texas 77 added our first White-tailed Hawks.

The nature trail behind the convention centre on South Padre Island is alleged to be the best place in south Texas to see all of the rails, and a reasonably sensible birder there confirmed this. Unfortunately on a hot weekend it also attracts many people, resulting in terrible disturbance, and as a consequence we only saw Sora Rail and point blank views of 2 Least Bitterns. The highlight here was 2 immaculate Franklin's Gulls, proving why they are the best larid (in the Northern Hemisphere at least).

The route from here to Laguna Atascosa added, in rapid succession, Harris Hawk, Chihuahuan Raven, Common Ground Dove and Plain Chachalaca. Soon after the area around the info centre at Laguna Atascosa quickly produced Bronzed Cowbird, White-tipped Dove, Olive Sparrow and the surprisingly smart Green Jay. We did not have enough time for the massive loop drive as we would have liked (Aplomado Falcons are regularly seen here), but birding with a large torch after dark saw us watching Lesser Nighthawk, Pauraque and Common Poorwill. Upon trying to leave, a heart stopping moment followed as a large gate blocked our exit. Luckily it is automatic, rolling back on our approach and allowing escape!

Night in McAllen.

Pollywog Ponds:

Golden-fronted Woodpecker 3; Belted Kingfisher; Black-bellied Whistling Duck; Scissor-tailed Flycatcher; Osprey; Song Sparrow; Ruby-throated Hummingbird; House Wren; Carolina Wren; Couch's Kingbird; Caspian Tern; Tennessee Warbler 1; Warbling Vireo 1; Least Grebe 6; Pied-billed Grebe; Northern Rough-winged Swallow; Ruddy Duck 1; Lesser Scaup 1; Blue-winged Teal; Cinnamon Teal 1; Common Yellowthroat; Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs; Pectoral Sandpiper; Blue-headed Vireo 2; American Goldfinch 30; Cedar Waxwing 100; Indigo Bunting 2; Cave Swallow 30+; Cliff Swallow 100+;

Texas 77 South:

White Pelican 200+; Crested Caracara 1; White-tailed Hawk 1;

South Padre Island:

Caspian and Royal Tern; Black Skimmer; Sora Rail 3; Yellow-rumped Warbler 10; Reddish Egret 1; Marbled Godwit 8; American Golden Plover; Mottled Duck; Short-billed Dowitcher; Scissor-tailed Flycatcher many moving through; Northern Waterthrush; Franklin's Gull 2; Least Bittern 2; Blue-winged Warbler 1; Orchard Oriole 3; Savannah Sparrow; Hooded Warbler; White-eyed Vireo; Ruby-crowned Kinglet.

--Laguna Atascosa:

Harris Hawk 7; Chihuahuan Raven 2; Common Ground Dove 1; Plain Chachalaca 4; Osprey 8.

Laguna Atascosa:

Green Jay 4; Couch's Kingbird; Bronzed Kingbird 4; White-tipped Dove 2; Olive Sparrow 3; Chimney Swift 5; White-tailed Hawk 1; Osprey; Harris Hawk 1; Pied-billed Grebe; Northern Harrier 3; Golden-fronted Woodpecker 3; Northern Bobwhite 4, I calling; Taiga Merlin 1; Eastern Kingbird 1; Reddish Egret 1; White-tailed Kite 1; Savannah Sparrow; Horned Lark; Lesser Nighthawk many; Common Pauraque 4; Common Poorwill 1.

6th April.

By the time we arrived at Santa Ana at 8.00 am the heat and humidity were horrendous. The helpful staff at the info. centre pointed us in the right direction and half an hour later a hundred yard stretch of the trail saw us watching Great Kiskadee, Black-crested Titmouse, Long-billed Thrasher, Altamira Oriole, Rose-throated Becard (a female at a nest), Clay-coloured Robin, Ladder-backed Woodpecker and Tropical Parula. This ballistic pace slowed as we walked the trails for the next couple of hours, but many birds were present including a Greater Roadrunner along a narrow, well wooded track. We also had our first views of the over-rated Rio Grande, but the searing heat forced a retreat to the air con. in the car. The hour long drive to Edinburgh cooled us down enough to brave the sun again, and after asking several bemused students we found the wintering Golden-crowned Warbler on the university campus. Amazingly this was the last date on which it was seen. From here we headed to a very busy Bentsen State Park (week-ends best avoided!). Unfortunately the conditions proved too much and we lounged around for a couple of hours. As the heat abated (slightly, it was still 90+ at 10 pm!) Grey Hawk and the dull Northern Beardless Tyrannulet were added, but as the trailer park was closed it was quieter than expected. As dusk approached thousands of raptors appeared, providing a fine spectacle as they dropped into the trees to roost. Two hours spent driving the area after dark proved worthwhile producing Elf, Great-horned, Eastern Screech and Ferruginous Pygmy Owls, Lesser Nighthawk, Chuck Will's Widow and Common Pauraque. Night in Rio Grande City, where we were asked, when relaying that we lived in England, if we could hear the bombs being dropped in Iraq!!

Santa Ana:

Great Kiskadee many; Golden-fronted Woodpecker many; Olive Sparrow; Bronzed Cowbird; Couch's Kingbird; Black-crested Titmouse; Long-billed Thrasher 5; Altamira Oriole 5+ incl. Pr. At nest; Green Jay; Rose-throated Becard fem. At nest; Clay-coloured Robin pr.; Ladder-backed Woodpecker; Sharp-shinned Hawk 1; Tropical Parula pr.; Nashville Warbler 2; Yellow-throated Warbler 3; Black-throated Green Warbler 2; American Kestrel 2; Harris Hawk 2; Blue-winged Teal; Shoveller; American Coot; Black-bellied Whistling Duck; Wilson's Snipe 20+; Black-crowned Night Heron 5; Plain Chachalaca; Little Blue Heron 7; Black-and-white Warbler 1; Greater Roadrunner 1; Buff-bellied Hummingbird male; Blue-headed Vireo 1; Scissor-tailed Flycatcher; White-winged Dove 9; Common Ground Dove 3; Mourning, White-tipped and Inca Dove.

Edinburgh University Campus:

Golden-crowned Warbler; Lesser Goldfinch 5; Ladder-backed Woodpecker; Cedar Waxwing; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Nashville Warbler; Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Bentsen State Park:

Least Bittern; Plain Chachalaca; Green Jay; White-winged and White-tipped Doves; Grey Hawk 1-2 ad. And 1 juv. around nest; Altamira Oriole pr.; Broad-winged Hawk sev. Thousand; Ladder-backed and Golden-fronted Woodpeckers; Great Kiskadee; Clay-coloured Robin 1; Northern Beardless Tyrannulet 1; Spotted Sandpiper 1; Coopers Hawk 1; Swainson's Hawk; Lincoln's Sparrow 5; Savannah Sparrow; Turkey and Black Vulture; Chimney Swift 2; Elf Owl 1 at nest hole; Great-horned Owl 2; Lesser Nighthawk; Ferruginous Pygmy Owl 2 calling; Chuck Wills Widow 2; Eastern Screech Owl 4+; Common Pauraque 4+.

7th April.

Salineno was our first port of call this morning, and what a place – less than 2 hours here added more than 20 species to our lists in a sensational spell of birding. My personal highlights here were the fantastic Green and enormous Ringed Kingfishers as well as the awesome Vermillion Flycatcher. The stretch of road (ca. 2 miles) leading to the river is just as birdy as the Rio Mediocore itself. No Brown Jays visited the feeders at Chapeno during our visit (they were apparently erratic this year) but 2 Wood Storks over were a bonus. Falcon Dam was out of bounds due to an apparent fracas in the Middle East, but the State Park produced some smart Black-throated Sparrows and the excellent Cactus Wren. The regular site at Zapata failed to give us White-collared Seedeater but information received here sent us to nearby San Ygnacio where one was easily bagged at a reserve set up for this species, by a certain Joel, for reasons best known to him. From here we headed north to the Edward's Plateau. Luck was on our side on the Texas 83 near Uvalde as we bumped into an immature Ferruginous Hawk. Dusk found us watching the amazing spectacle of 17,000,000 Free-tailed Bats leaving their cave. The change in scenery was almost as dramatic as the welcome drop in temperature. Night in Neal's Lodges.

Salineno:

Bullock's Oriole pr.; Say's Phoebe 1; Brewers Sparrow 2+; Clay-coloured Sparrow 5; Hooded Oriole 1; Cedar Waxwing 45; Spotted Sandpiper 2; Muscovy Duck 1; Ringed Kingfisher 2; Audubon's Oriole 1; Plain Chachalaca; Green Kingfisher 2; Verdin 1; Brown-crested Flycatcher 1; Red-billed Pigeon 3; Western Kingbird 2; Cooper's Hawk 1; Bank Swallow 3; Lark Sparrow 5; Vermillion Flycatcher pr.; Ash-throated Flycatcher 5; Grasshopper Sparrow 3; American Redstart 1; Pyrrhuloxia 5; Scaled Quail 1; Curve-billed Thrasher 3.

Chapeno:

Eastern Bluebird pr.; Grasshopper Sparrow 2; Spotted Sandpiper 1; Altamira Oriole 2; Green Jay; Wood Stork 2; Pyrrhuloxia 2; Lark Sparrow; Harris Hawk 2; Bewick's Wren 1; Ringed Kingfisher 1; Osprey.

Falcon State Park:

Black-throated Sparrow 5; Chihuahuan Raven 2; Curve-billed Thrasher; Greater Roadrunner 2; Cactus Wren 7; Bewick's Wren; Cassin's Sparrow pr.; Summer Tanager 1.

Zapata:

Green Heron; House Wren; Bullock's Oriole 3; Hooded Oriole 1; House Finch 1; Chihuahuan Raven 1; Crested Caracara; Harris Hawk.

San Ygnacio:

White Collared Seedeater 1;

Texas 83 nr. Uvalde:

Ferruginous Hawk imm. Northern Bobwhite 1 calling; Swainson's Hawk;

Uvalde:

Black-bellied Whistling Duck 4; White-winged Dove 1;

8th April.

Overnight at Neal's Lodges produced a thunderstorm of epic proportions, which cleared the air and led to a cold and very windy morning. The morning and evening spent walking the area revealed many Black-chinned Hummingbirds, Black-capped Vireo; Black Phoebe; Rufous-crowned Sparrow and Canyon Wren amongst others. Nearby Lost Maples (in far from ideal conditions) added more Black-capped Vireos and 2 fantastic Golden-cheeked Warblers. As the wind was from the North the chance of a coastal fall led to us heading straight back to the coast a day early and so we left an uncomfortably cold Neal's Lodges at dark. After a brief detour to twitch the Alamo in downtown San Antonio we spent the night over half way to Houston.

Neal's Lodges:

House Finch many; Black Vulture; Black-chinned Hummingbird common; Carolina Wren; Vermillion Flycatcher 2; Eastern Phoebe; Chipping Sparrow; Lesser Goldfinch 15; Chimney Swift 10; Purple Martin; Hooded Oriole; Spotted Towhee 3; Bewick's Wren; Black-capped Vireo 1; Western Scrub Jay 3; Olive Sparrow; Northern Raven 2; Black-crested Titmouse; White-winged Dove; Spotted Sandpiper 2; Black Phoebe 2; Yellow-throated Vireo 1; Rufous-crowned Sparrow 1; Pine Siskin 8; Say's Phoebe 2; Black-throated Sparrow 2; Bell's Vireo; Field Sparrow; Ash-throated Flycatcher 1; Carolina Chickadee 2; Canyon Wren 2; Red-shouldered Hawk 2; Ladder-backed Woodpecker 1; Golden-fronted Woodpecker; American Robin 10; Long-billed Thrasher 4; Yellow-throated Warbler 1; Scott's Oriole 1; Blue-grey Gnatcatcher; Great-horned Owl.

Lost Maples:

Black-capped Vireo 3 m + 1 f; Golden-cheeked Warbler 2 m; Canyon Wren 3+; Olive-sided Flycatcher 1; Eastern Phoebe; Lark Sparrow 2; Red-tailed Hawk 2;

Nearby on 2690:

Lark Sparrow 5; Eastern Wood Pewee 1; Cooper's Hawk; Greater Roadrunner 1; Harris Hawk; Crested Caracara.

9th April.

The first few hours saw us finishing the drive to Sabine Wood, allowing us the best part of the day there. This was a good move as there had been a huge (by Teeside standards anyway) fall and the trees were lifting with birds ("flocks of bouncing yellow things" – J.R.D.). Apart from the sheer scale my personal highlights were 4 Worm-eating, 5 Cerulean and 1 Swainson's Warbler, Louisiana

Waterthrush, Ovenbird and Yellow-breasted Chat. A quick look down the road at Sea Rim State Park again produced lots of birds including a Blue Grosbeak and American Redstart. Night in the Gulfway Motel in High Island.

We found Sabine Wood much easier to work and better than Boy Scouts Wood. Also on the “fallout” day of the 9th there were apparently over 500 cars at B.S.W. whereas less than 50 people were at Sabine Wood. Reading the logs left us in no doubt that Sabine had more birds and better variety. As we had booked the Gulfway Motel (the only one in High Island) in advance we clocked up a lot of miles as we favoured Sabine Wood (it is a fair trek with the coast road currently closed). As food is not available in the evening without a long drive from High Island then a more central location may be a better bet.

Nr. Houston:

Chimney Swift 25; Sharp-shinned Hawk 1; Broad-winged Hawk 1.

Sabine Wood:

Hooded Warbler c.200; Yellow-rumped Warbler c.100; Summer Tanager 8; Worm-eating Warbler 4; Common Yellowthroat 20; Ruby-crowned Kinglet 40; Black-and-white Warbler 50; Cerulean Warbler 5; Northern Parula 60; Brown Thrasher 15; White-eyed Vireo 25; Downy Woodpecker 2; Yellow-throated Vireo 2; Kentucky Warbler 5; Blue Jay 4; Red-eyed Vireo 15; Green Heron; Louisiana Waterthrush 8; Prothonotary Warbler 12; Swainson’s Thrush 5; Blue-winged Warbler 25; Red-bellied Woodpecker 1; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 3; Great-crested Flycatcher 5; Scarlet Tanager 1; Philadelphia Vireo 1; Swamp Sparrow; Acadian Flycatcher 5; Yellow-throated Warbler 2; Orchard Oriole 15; White-throated Sparrow 5; Ruby-throated Hummingbird 3; Willow Flycatcher 1; Pine Warbler 1; Black-throated Green Warbler 1; Northern Waterthrush 3; Tennessee Warbler 5; Black-bellied Whistling Duck 3; Indigo Bunting 1; Yellow-breasted Chat 1; Wood Thrush 5; Solitary Sandpiper 1; Ovenbird 1; Swainson’s Warbler 1; Nashville Warbler 1; Lincoln’s Sparrow 1.

Sea Rim State Park:

Louisiana Waterthrush ; Yellow-rumped Warbler ; Red-eyed Vireo ; Black-and-white Warbler ; Yellow-crowned Night Heron 1; Parula Warbler ; Blue-winged Warbler; Boat-tailed Grackle; Northern Waterthrush; American Redstart; Blue Grosbeak 1 m.; Lesser Scaup c.300 offshore; Northern Harrier; Indigo Bunting; also c. 50,000 hirundines, mainly Tree Swallows.

10th April.

A morning walk around B.S.W. revealed a good selection of similar migrants, the highlights being our only Brewer’s Blackbird and 5 Worm-eating Warblers. After our last brief visit we all wanted to return to Anahuac. Several pleasant hours were spent here watching a stunning array of water birds at close range. The only additions to the list were a late (ill looking) Sandhill Crane and 12 Seaside Sparrows. Returning to High Island we made our only visit to Smith’s Oaks. The area is hard to work for migrants but the close range views of the rookeries are good value. Our only American Purple Gallinules of the trip were seen here. Night in the Gulfway Motel.

Boy Scout’s Wood:

Worm-eating Warbler 5; Black-and-white Warbler; Northern Waterthrush; Hooded Warbler; Summer Tanager; Kentucky Warbler; Grey Catbird; Common Yellowthroat; White-eyed Vireo; Blue-winged Warbler; Orange-crowned Warbler; Swainson’s Thrush; Red-eyed Vireo; Great-crested Flycatcher; Yellow-throated Vireo; White-throated Sparrow; Brewer’s Blackbird 1; Ovenbird; Wood Thrush; Hermit Thrush; Louisiana Waterthrush;

Anahuac:

White-tailed Kite 1; Belted Kingfisher; American Kestrel; Hudsonian Whimbrel 200; American Golden Plover 50; Gull-billed Tern 6; Willet 10; Pectoral Sandpiper 50; Buff-breasted Sandpiper 40; Upland Sandpiper 2; Northern Harrier 4; Chimney Swift 3; Killdeer 20; Peregrine 1; Greater Yellowlegs 20; Sharp-shinned Hawk 1; Eastern Kingbird 20; Long-billed Dowitcher; Wilson's Phalarope 7; Least Sandpiper 5; Stilt Sandpiper 17; Black-necked Stilt 100; Forsters Tern 30; Caspian Tern 1; Least Bittern 10; American Bittern 3; Orchard Oriole 1; Sandhill Crane 1; Solitary Sandpiper 3; Seaside Sparrow 12; Eastern Meadowlark; Hooded Warbler; Black-and-white Warbler; Yellow-rumped Warbler; Northern Waterthrush; Louisiana Waterthrush; Blue-winged Warbler; Northern Parula; Brown Thrasher; White-faced Ibis; White Ibis; Fulvous Whistling Duck; Blue and Green-winged Teal; American Coot.

Smith's Oaks:

Indigo Bunting; Anhinga 3 (on the deck!); Great-white Egret; Tricoloured Heron; Roseate Spoonbill; Snowy Egret; Double-crested Cormorant; Little Blue Heron; American Purple Gallinule; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Orchard Oriole; Blue-winged Warbler; Summer Tanager; Grey Catbird.

11th April.

Our first port of call this morning was Fort Travis on the Bolivar Peninsula for a pair of Groove-billed Anis present in the area (apparently for a couple of months). They were soon found by the entrance along with a brief Mourning Warbler and many (by now common) migrants.

A quick look on the pools by the road to Bolivar Flats produced several rails including both King and Clapper Rails. 9 Upland Sandpipers were by the road at Crystal Beach, a regular site.

A large part of the day was spent in the Big Thicket area. This was not a pleasant area at all; very hot and dusty with limited access and all we saw new were several Bachman's Sparrows and Tufted Titmice.

The last few hours at Sabine Woods salvaged the day with a good selection of migrants, the highlights being Painted Bunting, Fish Crow and the sensational flyby of a Swallow-tailed Kite.

Fort Travis:

Groove-billed Ani pr.; Mourning Warbler 1; White Pelican 180; Grey Catbird 2; Yellow-breasted Chat 1; Lincoln's Sparrow; Hooded Warbler; White-eyed Vireo; Common Yellowthroat; Black-crowned Night Heron; Northern Parula; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Orchard Oriole; Loggerhead Shrike.

Bolivar Peninsula:

White-tailed Kite 1; Red-tailed Hawk 2; Belted Kingfisher; Sora Rail 2; King Rail 1+; Clapper Rail 1+; Upland Sandpiper 9.

Big Thicket:

Red-shouldered Hawk 2; White-throated Sparrow; Carolina Chickadee; Red-bellied Woodpecker; Pine Warbler; Brown Thrasher; Blue-grey Gnatcatcher; Hooded Warbler; Bachman's Sparrow 4; Tufted Titmouse; Grey-cheeked Thrush.

Sabine Woods:

Belted Kingfisher; Summer Tanager 20; Kentucky Warbler 6; Wood Thrush 4; Hooded Warbler 60; Northern Parula 50; Yellow-rumped Warbler 30; Black-and-white Warbler 25; Orchard Oriole 15;

Indigo Bunting 8; Prothonotary Warbler 1; Tennessee Warbler 2; Yellow-throated Warbler 1; Blue-winged Warbler 5; Common Yellowthroat 4; Yellow-billed Cuckoo 1; Blue Jay; Red-eyed Vireo 4; Downy Woodpecker 3; Ruby-throated Hummingbird 3; Nashville Warbler 2; Painted Bunting 1 male; Swallow-tailed Kite 1 over; Orange-crowned Warbler 2; Grey-cheeked Thrush 1; Swainson's Thrush 1; Hermit Thrush 2; Acadian Flycatcher 1; Worm-eating Warbler 1; Northern Waterthrush 1; Louisiana Waterthrush 2; Fish Crow 1.

12th April.

Our last day and an early set off to W.G.Jones State Park. Most of the morning spent here easily produced Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Brown-headed Nuthatch, along with an obliging Red-headed and brief Hairy Woodpecker.

The last birds of note were 2 adult Yellow-crowned Night Herons in a ditch along J.F.K. Boulevard in Houston.

Systematic List.

Pied-billed Grebe

Least Grebe: at least 6 with young at Pollywog Ponds (5.4)

American White Pelican

Brown Pelican

Double-crested Cormorant

Neotropic Cormorant: regularly seen on the Bolivar Peninsula on the piers e.g. At Rollover Pass, 8 (3.4)

Anhinga: small numbers throughout, mainly in flight.

American Bittern: easily seen at Anahuac.

Least Bittern: 2 South Padre Island (5.4); 1 Bentsen (6.4); 10 Anahuac (10.4).

Great Blue Heron

Great (White) Egret

Snowy Egret

Reddish Egret

Tricoloured Heron

Little Blue Heron

Cattle Egret

Green Heron

Black-Crowned Night Heron

Yellow-crowned Night Heron

White Ibis

White-faced Ibis

Wood Stork: 2 over Chapeno (7.4)

Black-bellied Whistling Duck

Fulvous Whistling Duck

Muscovy Duck: 1 flew upriver at Salineno and landed to the west.

Mallard

Mottled Duck

Gadwall

American Wigeon

Northern Shoveler

Cinnamon Teal: female with Bl. W. Teal at Pollywog Ponds (5.4).

Blue-winged Teal
Green-winged Teal
Lesser Scaup
Red-breasted Merganser
Ruddy Duck
Turkey Vulture
Black Vulture
Northern Harrier
White-tailed Kite: regularly seen on the Bolivar Peninsula, less frequent further South along the coast.
Swallow-tailed Kite: 1 over Sabine Woods (11.4).
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper's Hawk
Harris's Hawk: frequently encountered south of Corpus Christi.
Grey Hawk: ad + juv at Bentsen (6.4).
Red-shouldered Hawk
Broad-winged Hawk
Swainson's Hawk
White-tailed Hawk: seen near Kingsville and around Laguna Atascosa (5.4)
Red-tailed Hawk
Ferruginous Hawk: imm by Texas 83 nr. Uvalde.
Bald Eagle: adult over Texas 35.
Osprey
Crested Caracara: small numbers throughout.
"Taiga" Merlin: 1 Laguna Atascosa (5.4).
American Kestrel
Peregrine
Plain Chachalaca: frequently encountered from Laguna Atascosa west along the valley.
Northern Bobwhite
Scaled Quail: 1 flushed twice alongside the road to Salineno (7.4).
Wild Turkey: 1 at Aransas (5.4).
Purple Gallinule: 3 Smith's Oaks (10.4).
Moorhen
American Coot
Clapper Rail: at least 1 seen on roadside pools near Bolivar Flats (11.4)
King Rail: 1 on same pools (11.4).
Sora
Yellow Rail: 1 briefly Anahuac (3.4).
Whooping Crane: 2 Aransas (4.4).
Sandhill Crane: 1 Anahuac (10.4).
Grey Plover
American Golden Plover
Piping Plover
Semipalmated Plover
Snowy Plover
Wilson's Plover
Killdeer
American Oystercatcher
American Avocet
Black-necked Stilt
Greater Yellowlegs

Lesser Yellowlegs
Solitary Sandpiper
Willet
Spotted Sandpiper
Upland Sandpiper
Hudsonian Whimbrel
Long-billed Curlew
Marbled Godwit
Sanderling
Dunlin
Pectoral Sandpiper
Western Sandpiper
Semipalmated Sandpiper
Least Sandpiper
Stilt Sandpiper
Long-billed Dowitcher
Short-billed Dowitcher
Buff-breasted Sandpiper
Wilson's Snipe
Wilson's Phalarope
Bonaparte's Gull
Franklin's Gull
Laughing Gull
Ring-billed Gull
American Herring Gull
Lesser Black-backed Gull: first winter at Rollover Pass (3.4)
Caspian Tern
Royal Tern
Sandwich Tern
Forster's Tern
Least Tern
Gull-billed Tern
American Black Tern
Black Skimmer
Mourning Dove
White-winged Dove
Collared Dove
White-tipped Dove: regularly seen from Laguna Atascosa west along the valley.
Inca Dove
Common Ground Dove: only odd ones along the lower valley.
Red-billed Pigeon: 3 at Salineno on island in river to the north of watch point (7.4).
Yellow-billed Cuckoo
Groove-billed Ani: pair at Fort Travis at south end of Bolivar Peninsula (11.4).
Greater Roadrunner
Great Horned Owl: dusk encounters at Fulton, Bentsen and Neal's Lodges.
Eastern Screech Owl: several calling and 2 seen at Bentsen (6.4).
Elf Owl: 1 at the nest hole at Bentsen (6.4).
Ferruginous Pygmy Owl: 2 calling at Bentsen at the south end of the outer loop (6.4).
Common Pauraque: calling and seen at Laguna Atascosa (5.4) and Bentsen (6.4).
Common Poorwill; 1 at Laguna Atascosa (5.4).

Chuck-will's-widow: 2 calling Bentsen (6.4); 1 on the ground all day at B.S.W. (10.4).
Common Nighthawk
Lesser Nighthawk: calling and easily seen in numbers at Laguna Atascosa (5.4) and Bentsen (6.4).
Chimney Swift
Buff-bellied Hummingbird: 1 on the feeders at Aransas (4.4) and Santa Ana (6.4).
Black-chinned Hummingbird: numerous at Neal's Lodges (8.4).
Ruby-throated Hummingbird
Belted kingfisher
Ringed Kingfisher: 2+ at Salineno and 1 Chapeno (7.4).
Green Kingfisher: 2 at Salineno (7.4).
Red-headed Woodpecker: 1 at W.G.Jones State Park (12.4).
Golden-fronted Woodpecker: commonly seen from Corpus Christi to the Edward's Plateau.
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Red-cockaded Woodpecker 4 behind the info centre at W.G.Jones State Park.
Ladder-backed Woodpecker: regularly seen in the same areas as Golden-fronted but slightly scarcer.
Rose-throated Becard: female at nest Santa Ana (6.4).
Northern Beardless Tyrannulet: 1 singing at Bentsen (6.4).
Olive-sided Flycatcher: 1 at Lost Maples (8.4).
Eastern Wood Pewee.
Acadian Flycatcher
Willow Flycatcher
Black Phoebe: pair by the river at Neal's Lodges (8.4).
Eastern Phoebe
Say's Phoebe
Vermillion Flycatcher: pairs at Salineno (7.4) and Neal's Lodges (8.4).
Ash-throated Flycatcher: several at Salineno (7.4) and 1 at Neal's Lodges (8.4).
Brown-crested Flycatcher: 1 at Salineno (7.4).
Great-crested Flycatcher
Eastern Kingbird
Couch's Kingbird
Western Kingbird
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Great Kiskadee: common Santa Ana and Bentsen (6.4).
Loggerhead Shrike
Red-eyed Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Philadelphia Vireo
Bell's Vireo: 1 Neal's Lodges (8.4).
Black-capped Vireo: 1 male Neal's Lodges (8.4); 3 males and 1 female Lost Maples the same day.
White-eyed Vireo
Yellow-throated Vireo
Blue-headed Vireo.
Blue Jay
Western Scrub Jay: common at Neal's Lodges.
Green Jay: seen often at Laguna Atascosa, Santa Ana, Bentsen and Salineno.
Common Raven
Chihuahuan Raven: several easily seen on the roadsides all along the lower valley.

American Crow
Fish Crow
Horned Lark
Purple Martin
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Bank Swallow
Tree Swallow
Cliff Swallow
Cave Swallow: ca. 25 nesting in culverts by the entrance to Pollywog Ponds (5.4).
Barn Swallow
Tufted Titmouse
Black-crested Titmouse: several seen at Santa Ana and Bentsen (6.4) and Neal's Lodges (8.4).
Carolina Chickadee
Verdin: 1 at Salineno (7.4).
Brown-headed Nuthatch: at least 4 behind the info centre at W.G.Jones State Park (12.4).
Carolina Wren
Bewick's Wren
House Wren
Sedge Wren: only seen (with difficulty) in the Salt marsh at Bolivar Flats (3.4).
Marsh Wren: several seen in long damp grass at Anahuac on both visits (3+10.4).
Cactus Wren: 7 + easily seen at Falcon State Park (7.4).
Canyon Wren: 2 at Neal's Lodges and several singing at Lost Maples (8.4).
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Blue-grey Gnatcatcher
Eastern Bluebird
American Robin
Clay-coloured Robin: pair at Santa Ana and 1 at Bentsen (6.4).
Wood Thrush
Swainson's Thrush
Grey-cheeked Thrush
Hermit Thrush
Grey Catbird
Northern Mockingbird
Brown Thrasher
Long-billed Thrasher: 5 at Santa Ana (6.4) and 3 at Neal's Lodges (8.4).
Curve-billed Thrasher: 3 at Salineno (7.4) and several later that day at Falcon State Park.
Starling
Cedar Waxwing
Tropical Parula: a pair including a singing male at Santa Ana (6.4).
Northern Parula
Orange-crowned Warbler
Tennessee Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Cerulean Warbler
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Black-throated Green Warbler
Golden-cheeked Warbler: 2 males singing at Lost Maples (8.4).
Pine Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Worm-eating Warbler: 4 Sabine Woods (9.4), 5 B.S.W. (10.4), 1 Sabine Woods (11.4).

Prothonotary Warbler
Black-and-white Warbler
American Redstart
Swainson's Warbler: 1 Sabine Woods (9.4).
Ovenbird
Northern Waterthrush
Louisiana Waterthrush
Kentucky Warbler
Mourning Warbler: male at Fort Travis (11.4).
Common Yellowthroat
Hooded Warbler
Golden-crowned Warbler: the wintering individual was seen at the University of Texas campus in
Edinburgh on its last date (6.4).
Yellow-breasted Chat
Summer Tanager
Scarlet Tanager
Pyrrhuloxia: 3 along the road to Salineno (7.4).
Northern Cardinal
Blue Grosbeak: a male at Sea Rim State Park (9.4) was apparently the first of the spring.
Indigo Bunting
Painted Bunting: a very skulking male at Sabine Woods (11.4).
White-collared Seedeater: male at San Ygnacio (7.4).
Spotted Towhee
Olive Sparrow: many seen from Laguna Atascosa, along the valley to the Edward's Plateau.
Rufous-crowned Sparrow: 1 at Neal's Lodges (8.4).
Cassin's Sparrow: a pair at Falcon State Park (7.4).
Bachman's Sparrow: 4 seen in the Big Thicket near Beaumont (11.4).
Black-throated Sparrow: 5 at Falcon State Park (7.4) and 2 at Neal's Lodges (8.4).
Field Sparrow
Brewer's Sparrow: at least 2 at Salineno with the following species (7.4).
Clay-coloured Sparrow
Chipping Sparrow
Grasshopper Sparrow
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow: 5+ in the salt marsh at Bolivar Flats (3.4).
Seaside Sparrow: 12 on the Yellow Rail Prairies, Anahuac (10.4).
Savannah Sparrow
Lark Sparrow
White-throated Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Lincoln's Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
Eastern Meadowlark
Brown-headed Cowbird
Bronzed Cowbird: only noted were 4 each at Laguna Atascosa (5.4) and Santa Ana (6.4).
Red-winged Blackbird
Brewer's Blackbird
Common Grackle
Boat-tailed Grackle
Great-tailed Grackle

Bullock's Oriole

Hooded Oriole: 1 Salineno (7.4), 1 Zapata (7.4), 3 Neal's Lodges (8.4).

Orchard Oriole

Altamira Oriole: several seen at Santa Ana and Bentsen (6.4), and 1 Chapeno (7.4).

Scott's Oriole: 1 at Neal's Lodges (8.4).

Audubon's Oriole: 1 at Salineno (7.4).

House Finch

Pine Siskin

Lesser Goldfinch: 5 at Edinburgh (6.4) and 15 at Neal's Lodges (8.4). All males were black backed.

American Goldfinch

House Sparrow