

Texas:

Gulf Coast Migration in Spring

Thu 12th – Fri 20th April 2012



We saw several diminutive and beautiful Least Bitterns at Anahuac on our various visits – each one was a real delight
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**report compiled by tour leader:
Chris Charlesworth**

Trip Diary

Tour Leader: Chris Charlesworth

with Paul & Sue Daunter, Gladys Grant, Brian Leach, Vivien Pike, Martyn & Sue Riggs, and Bryan Smith

Thu 12th April - The group arrived in Houston and we made a quick transfer to hotel, spotting Great-tailed Grackle and Eurasian Collared Dove en route. Dinner at Chili's was very good.

Fri 13th April – After breakfast we departed the hotel and made our way north along the freeways of Houston to the W. G. Jones State Forest, where we explored the forest of Loblolly and Shortleaf pines behind the park headquarters. Barely a minute after we got out of the van, a pair of Eastern Bluebirds arrived on the scene and tended to a nest in a box nearby. We strolled through the pines, finding, one by one, most of the birds we anticipated to see here. Lovely Red-headed Woodpeckers graced the treetops and were quite easy to see, while the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker was seen just once, and luckily our one view was a good one! Also high in the pines, tiny groups of Brown-headed Nuthatches 'squeaked' like rubber duckies. The continuous calls of Northern Mockingbirds and Blue Jays kept us occupied.

With a little searching we had fantastic looks at a male Summer Tanager, decked out in red. Pine Warblers flitted through the trees, while a Carolina Wren gave us a good view as it sang from the top of a dead elm. Butterflies emerged as the day warmed up and numbers of Palamedes Swallowtails, Painted Lady and Monarch were lovely to see. We got back to the van and Gladys informed us she had seen a Wild Turkey strolling about, so we went off and soon found the bird poking about around the feeders. Also in the area of the feeders were Carolina Chickadees and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

We picked up lunch and took it to Middle Lake. A short walk before we ate, produced our first good looks at Mourning Dove, Northern Cardinal and high above, a group of five Wood Storks sailing by. Also, above the pines, were both Turkey and Black Vultures. Whilst we ate our lunch, an adult Red-shouldered Hawk was watched alongside a pond, providing excellent views and just as we finished a hatch of termites emerged from the woods and we decided it was a good time to head to a new location.

Jesse Jones Nature Park, not far from our hotel in Houston, proved to be very productive on this warm afternoon. A stroll along the Cypress Boardwalk produced a gorgeous male Prothonotary Warbler singing his little heart out; other warbles we caught a glimpse of included several Northern Parulas and a stunning Yellow-throated Warbler. Luckily we obtained scope views of both Acadian Flycatcher and Red-eyed Vireo here as well. A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron obligingly sat on a Cypress near the swamp, allowing photographers to snap away and our first mammals of the tour were seen here, including White-tailed Deer and Eastern Grey Squirrel. Around the visitors' centre we watched Ruby-throated Hummingbirds come in to flowers and feeders: both Green and Brown Anoles, two small lizards, the latter of which is introduced from the Caribbean, were seen here too. After what turned out to be a very good first day, we headed back to the hotel for a little siesta before returning to Chili's for a delicious dinner.

Sat 14th April – Despite gusty south winds today, we managed to have an excellent day of birding on the Upper Texas Coast. A few of us assembled outside the hotel in Houston for a little walk about at dawn, with highlights including a lovely Little Blue Heron in the pond behind the hotel, and several House Finches, which appeared to be nesting in a Cedar near the parking lot.

Having loaded our luggage into the van, we began the drive to Winnie at 7:45am. Once in Winnie, we dropped off our luggage, picked up some lunch and made our way to the rightfully famous Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge; along FM 1985, the access road to the refuge, we saw our first dazzling Scissor-tailed Flycatchers as well as dapper Eastern Kingbirds. The Skillern Tract was alive with shorebirds as they foraged in flooded fields and our trip list bulged with mouth-watering birds: Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher and both Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs. Waders were abundant too, and amongst numerous White-faced Ibis, we picked out a Glossy Ibis, an uncommon bird on the Texas Coast; a nesting colony of Roseate Spoonbills were watched through the scope as flocks of waders were disturbed by a couple of Northern Harriers. Vivien, with her sharp eyes, picked out an American Bittern lurking in the reeds.

We then headed over to the Shoveler Pond area at Anahuac, where we had lunch. A quick stop in the gift shop satisfied the shopping urges some had, and then we continued on the driving loop around Shoveler Pond. Highlights here were good looks at a hunting Least Bittern as well as a single Sora and several Boat-tailed

Grackles, our first for the tour. Driving along we saw several American Alligators basking in the afternoon sun, as well as a few Red-eared Sliders doing the same. Just as we were exiting the refuge, an immature Swainson's Hawk was seen atop a dead tree, and soon thereafter we had a Crested Caracara in a barren field.

Once at High Island we made our way to Boy Scout Woods, where 'the drip' at Purky's Pond was where the action was. Just a few of the things seen here included dazzling Indigo Buntings and Northern Cardinals as well as Kentucky, Worm-eating and Wilson's Warblers, Brown Thrasher and Grey Catbird! Gladys was lucky enough to see a Harris's Sparrow, a rare spring find along the Upper Coast. Reluctantly, we left the grandstand at Boy Scout Woods and headed to Winnie where we checked in to the hotel and then went for dinner. At the end of the day we had seen nearly 90 species!

Sun 15th April – At 7:30 this morning we emerged from the hotel in Winnie and made our way east towards Sabine Pass near the Louisiana border. As we neared Sabine Pass, numerous waders were noted over the coastal marshes, such as Tricolored Heron, Roseate Spoonbill and Neotropic Cormorant. Winds gusted strongly as we birded the marshes of Texas Point National Wildlife Refuge. The winds did not keep us from seeing some good birds though: our highlights included several big Clapper Rails that crossed the road in front of us, and numerous Seaside Sparrows making their presence known as they emitted flight songs in the marshes. Out over Sabine Lake, the border between Texas and Louisiana, we watched as several Brown and American White Pelicans sailed in the wind and perhaps our best bird of the day, a Magnificent Frigatebird sailed effortlessly over the churning waters.

After a quick stop at Sabine Pass Battleground State Park, where we saw our first Royal Terns, we began hunting for a place to have lunch. Being a Sunday, nothing was open in the tiny, hurricane ravaged village of Sabine Pass, so we headed back through the forest of oil refineries to Port Arthur, a very depressed and run down town, where we found a chicken shop. As we waited for our chicken to be served we watched our first White-winged Doves do their thing, then consumed our lunches in a little park in Port Arthur and decided the chicken was just right!

We made our way to Sabine Woods, where we spent a couple of hours wandering trails and watching 'the drip' for migrants. Things were a bit slow, but we still managed to pick up Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Wood Pewee and a slightly out of range Western Kingbird. The drip attracted Orchard Orioles, Blue Jay, and a lovely little male Northern Parula. Female Common Yellowthroat and female Painted Bunting as well as a White-eyed Vireo skulked in bushes behind the drip. Temperatures in the sun were nearing 30 degrees Celsius, so we decided to head back towards the van, taking the 'scenic' route through the trees and bumping into a little group of Palm Warblers, a Yellow-throated Warbler and a Prothonotary Warbler.

Our final stop of the day was at the beach at Sea Rim State Park. The beach itself was packed with weekend sun-seekers, so we investigated a lagoon nearby. The little lagoon was quite good, offering up Wilson's Plover, Short-billed Dowitcher, American Avocet, Black Tern, Ring-billed Gull and more. All in all, it was another very productive day.

Mon 16th April – Many of us were awakened during the night by the loud roar of thunder as a cold front passed over Winnie. At breakfast in the hotel, birders chatted with one another about possible 'falls' of migrants due to bad weather. We headed off towards the Bolivar Peninsula with optimism, even though the dark clouds and flashes of lightning continued. This is the sort of event every birder wishes for when they come to Texas in April.

Our first stop today was at Rollover Pass, an area where, during times of prohibition, barrels of booze were rolled across a narrow point of land between the Gulf of Mexico and an inland canal. Today, it is a fantastic area for birding, with extensive muddy shores and gravel bars excellent for waders, gulls and terns. Rain continued to fall lightly as we scanned through the flocks at Rollover, where we watched great numbers of elegant Black Skimmers swirl through the air, along with Least, Royal, Sandwich, Forster's, Black and Caspian Terns; Laughing and a few American Herring Gulls, also. Shorebirds included Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling, American Oystercatcher, Marbled Godwit and good numbers of American Avocets.

We then turned down Yacht Basin Rd where flooded fields were again inundated with waders. A few Long-billed Curlews, sporting ridiculously long bills, prodded away at the mud, alongside Whimbrel and the equally long-billed Marbled Godwits. Smaller waders like Short-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Plover and Dunlin scampered about like rodents. With a little coaxing, a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow popped up into clear view in the marsh nearby, while in another bush, a Dickcissel and a Swamp Sparrow sat side by side. Just as they did

yesterday, Clapper Rails ran across the road, one of which perched on a lawn long enough for us to get a good view. A Crested Caracara, first seen as it sat on the mud, took to the air and was followed by the usual entourage of blackbirds.

After a quick pit-stop in Crystal Beach where we picked up some lunch at the supermarket, we headed for Bolivar Flats. Along the road to the flats we glimpsed an Eastern Meadowlark as well as a Savannah Sparrow. In the sky overhead, a White-tailed Kite hovered motionless in the breeze. Down on the beach, the sand was alive with waders. Many of them we had already seen, but new for the list were Western and Semipalmated Sandpipers, and the endangered Piping Plovers; out on the sea a mixed group of Lesser and Greater Scaup bobbed up and down on the waves. Rains returned so we decided to make the drive to High Island while the weather was ominous. This worked out well to our advantage as by the time we arrived, the rain had just stopped.

We had our lunch in the parking lot where it became evident that many birds had been pushed down by the storms. There were Orchard Orioles, Summer Tanagers, Indigo Buntings, Black-throated Green Warbler and Inca Dove in trees surrounding the lot. A visit to Purky's Pond produced some excitement at the drip where a dazzling male Hooded Warbler made a brief appearance, while a male Yellow Warbler took his time allowing great views. Tennessee Warbler, Ovenbird, Indigo Bunting, and Wood Thrush also all appeared. We took a stroll to the 'Cathedral' where Yellow-throated Vireo, Scarlet and Summer Tanager, Great Crested Flycatcher and Rose-breasted Grosbeak were highlights. Rumours began to travel through the woods that Smith Oaks, the other preserve at High Island, was the place to be so we made our way in that direction. On the way to the bus, we paused at one particularly busy tree that had American Redstart, Yellow-throated Warbler and Warbling Vireo dangling from the branches.

Over at Smith Oaks, birds were literally dripping from the trees. We scanned through a dozen or so Indigo Buntings and found two gaudy male Painted Buntings mixed in. Waves of warblers surfed through the treetops, many of them Tennessee and Black-throated Greens, mixed in however were some real gems such as a lonely Canada Warbler and a brilliant male Bay-breasted Warbler. I saw a Cerulean Warbler, but couldn't get any of the group onto it before it dashed off; Brian spotted a Golden-winged Warbler. Masses of birders gathered in openings where warblers could be seen streaming through. As steady rains returned we made our way back to Winnie, happy and hoping that tomorrow might somehow rival today. We finished off the day with nearly 120 species!

Tue 17th April – This morning, after the previous day's rains, we were glad to see the sun shining away as we made our way to High Island. A short visit to Boy Scout Woods proved that many of the exciting birds seen yesterday remained for yet another day. The trees were lit up by such A-list celebrities as Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, Baltimore Orioles and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. As we were making our way back to the van, a Raccoon was sighted as he fished in a small algae covered pond.

We returned to Anahuac this morning, but first stopped along the roadside to check a culvert for Cave Swallows, which we saw, amongst the usual Cliff and Barn Swallows. The flooded fields at Skillern Tract again were excellent for waders providing fantastic views of Stilt Sandpiper, Solitary Sandpiper, our first Wilson's Phalarope. Martyn spotted a pair of American Wigeon on one pond, and this provided our first and only view of this species for the tour. A short stroll at 'The Willows' at Anahuac was also quite interesting, with the highlight being a roosting Common Nighthawk right beside the boardwalk. Also of interest was a Green Heron sitting tight on a stick nest above the murky water.

After lunch at the park headquarters, we made one last visit to Shoveler Pond, and had brief but satisfying looks at our first and only King Rail of the tour. A Least Bittern was spotted as it lurked through reeds at the water's edge, and a Sora also made a brief appearance. After a little effort, a Marsh Wren was seen quite well in the reedy marsh. Happy with our haul at Anahuac we headed back towards High Island.

The afternoon at Smith Oaks was quite good, with a pair of Yellow-billed Cuckoos sunning themselves high in the trees, possibly the highlight. There were all sorts of warblers once again, all of which we had already seen. We went to 'the drip' at Boy Scout woods at the end of the day to collect Gladys and Bryan who had been sitting on the benches enjoying birds coming in to bathe - they had seen a Yellow-breasted Chat and a Golden-winged Warbler, both of which we were quite envious.

Wed 18th April – As we emerged one by one from the hotel this morning, we commented on the cooler temperatures we encountered. Clear skies overnight had allowed the air to cool down nicely. Without a cloud in

the sky all day, we made our way to Taylor Bayou, a lovely area of Cypress swamps and forest festooned with birds. Our first stop offered up a lovely trio of warblers, Prothonotary, Yellow-throated and Northern Parula, all of which showed off nicely. Martyn spotted an Anhinga flying across the road and before we left the bayou we had seen the bird several times. Also flying to and fro were Yellow-crowned Night and Little Blue Herons. A group of about five Cedar Waxwings paused just long enough for us to spy their shaggy little crests, and a female Blue Grosbeak made a brief appearance then disappeared into the swamp. Perhaps one of the less exciting new birds of the trip, Fish Crows were in evidence here as we noted up to half a dozen of these birds, which are slightly smaller and have a croakier call in comparison to the American Crow. We drove to another location in the bayou, and here we were rewarded with scope views of an adult Broad-winged Hawk sitting on a telephone pole. We finally managed great views of a Tufted Titmouse in a patch of roadside pines, and Gladys spotted a Solitary Sandpiper sitting tight on a stump in a bit of swamp.

Happy with our first stop, we carried on to the city of Beaumont where we picked up some lunch, and watched several Broad-winged Hawks and a lovely adult Swainson's Hawk sail overhead. While exploring Tyrell Park, several Eastern Fox Squirrels were noted dashing across the manicured lawn; a brief look at a Cattail marsh produced our first view of American Moorhen, recently split from the European Moorhen. Amongst the Blue-winged Teal, we picked out Green-winged Teal and Shoveler, the former new for our trip list. A Water Snake was noted slithering through the swampy edge of the marsh. The woods in Tyrell Park were particularly good to us this morning. Undoubtedly, the highlight was a stunning male Pileated Woodpecker that whacked chunks of bark from a tree above where we ate lunch; also nice, however, were both Red-headed and Red-bellied Woodpeckers on the same dead tree. Overhead the raucous calls of Red-shouldered Hawks penetrated the still air.

To finish off our already fantastic day of birding we headed to Sabine Woods to check for migrants. The Oaks were full of birds, including about 17 species of warblers, including glimmering Golden-winged, Blue-winged and Blackburnian and a lovely male Cerulean Warbler that put on quite a nice show. In the understorey were Veery, Gray-cheeked and Wood Thrushes, offering a great opportunity to study these skulky forest denizens. We checked through a dozen or more Red-eyed Vireos but couldn't find a Black-whiskered Vireo seen the day before - this Caribbean vireo is a casual visitor to the Texas Coast. Another fantastic day, by the end of it all, we had seen well over a hundred species once again.

Thu 19th April – Sadly, this was our last day in Texas, but we made the best of it, heading out in search of a few bird species that had thus far eluded us. First stop was a ploughed field near Anahuac where a little scanning produced our first American Golden Plovers, as well as a lovely Buff-breasted Sandpiper; on a fence, a male Dickcissel sang in the sunlight offering some 'eye candy' for photographers to snap at. On our way to High Island, I spotted three Upland Sandpipers strolling through a grassy field, another first for the tour.

Rollover Pass on the Bolivar Peninsula, is always a favorite and today it did not disappoint. We had two white-morph Reddish Egrets on a gravelly island in the bay, another new bird for us. Amongst the 'scads' of Forster's, Royal, Caspian, Sandwich, Black and Least Terns, two Common Terns were found preening themselves busily. Despite a good effort we could not lure a Sedge Wren into view, but could hear it singing away in a patch of long grass. Before we headed to Bolivar Flats, we made a short diversion and had great looks at several male and female Blue Grosbeaks, noting their deeper blue and larger size in comparison to Indigo Bunting.

Bolivar Flats was very pleasant this morning as we walked along the beach in the sun. Shorebirds were everywhere, feeding busily on the sandy beaches. New for us were several Horned Larks foraging in the sand, and finally a proper Reddish Egret dancing in the shallows. We scanned through a group of Lesser Scaup and had two female Surf Scoters amongst them. Three beautiful Black-necked (Eared) Grebes were a surprise as well, in full breeding plumage I might add.

On our way back to Winnie to collect our luggage and have a bite of lunch, we stopped briefly at a feeder in High Island and had satisfactory views of a male Bronzed Cowbird amongst the other icterid species. After lunch we made the drive of about an hour and a half to Houston Airport, and I bid adieu to the eight Limosa participants I had grown fond of and enjoyed very much showing around the birding hotspots on the Upper Texas Coast!

Fri 20th April – Arriving safely back in the UK after the flight, the total list at the end of the tour was a hefty 204 species.

Chris Charlesworth

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF SPECIES RECORDED
(group total of 204 bird species recorded)

Fulvous Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*

Good numbers seen at Anahuac in flooded fields and ponds on both visits.

Black-bellied Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis*

Seen regularly in coastal wetlands, especially near Sabine Pass. Also seen at Anahuac in fields.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

Two seen in flight (pair) at Taylor Bayou on April 18th.

Mottled Duck *Anas fulvigula*

Seen numerous times at Anahuac NWR and Texas Point and other coastal locations. Most often seen in flight.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*

Common on ponds and lakes.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

Fairly common at wetlands such as Anahuac NWR, where seen on both visits.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

A few seen at Anahuac NWR, especially around Skillern Tract.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Male seen at 'Cattail Marsh' at Tyrell Park in Beaumont on April 19th

American Wigeon *Anas penelope*

A couple noted on flooded fields at Skillern Tract at Anahuac NWR.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

Small numbers mixed in with Lesser Scaup flock at Bolivar Flats.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

Flocks of 50-100 seen at Bolivar Flats on April 16th and 19th.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*

One or two with scaup at Bolivar Flats on 19th.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

Small flock seen at Rollover Pass on Bolivar Peninsula.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

One flew overhead at Rollover Pass on April 16th.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*

A couple seen on small pond next to visitors center at Anahuac NWR. One also seen on small Cypress swamp at Taylor Bayou, on Patterson Rd.

Black-necked (Eared) Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

Three seen in fine breeding plumage at Bolivar Flats on 19th.

White Ibis *Eudocimus albus*

Common at wetland areas throughout.

White-faced Ibis *Plegadis chihi*

Common in wetland areas, especially numerous at Anahuac NWR.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

One seen at Anahuac NWR at Skillern Tract.

Wood Stork *Mycteria americana*

Five seen high overhead at W.G. Jones State Forest on April 13th.

Roseate Spoonbill *Platalea ajaja*

Quite common and seen most days in wetland areas.

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*

One seen well in reeds at Skillern Tract at Anahuac NWR.

Least Bittern *Ixobrychus exilis*

A few seen very well at Anahuac NWR.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax violacea*

One very obliging individual perched in cypress tree along Cypress Boardwalk at Jesse Jones Nature Centre in Houston. Also seen at Tyrell Park in Beaumont. A few noted in flight at Taylor Bayou.

Green Heron *Butorides virescens*

Seen almost daily at ponds and bayous, including bird on nest at 'The Willows' at Anahuac NWR.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Common in open agricultural fields where livestock present.

Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias*

Common and seen almost daily anywhere near water.

Great White Egret *Casmerodius alba*

Common anywhere water present.

Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens*

Two 'white morph' birds seen at Rollover Pass, while one in fine 'traditional' plumage seen dancing in shallows at Bolivar Flats.

Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor*

Common anywhere near wetlands.

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea*

Small numbers seen in wetland areas. First one seen fishing in pond behind hotel in Houston. Also noted at Anahuac NWR & Taylor Bayou.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*

Common in wetland areas, especially so around Anahuac NWR.

American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*

Small numbers seen in flight at Texas Point NWR and high overhead at Tyrell Park in Beaumont.

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*

Common along Gulf Coast where often seen flying low over surf in formation.

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*

One female type seen in strong winds at Texas Point NWR on 15th.

Neotropic Cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasilianus*

This smaller and more slender cousin of the Double-crested Cormorant was seen most days near water. Many seen nesting at High Island heronry.

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga*

Seen by one observer high overhead at High Island. Seen by rest of group at Taylor Bayou where one flew overhead several times.

Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*

Common and seen daily cruising over open areas in search of carrion.

Black Vulture *Coragyps atratus*

Common and seen most days soaring overhead.

Crested Caracara *Caracara cheriway*

Seen numerous times on this trip, with memorable birds at Yacht Basin Rd on Bolivar Peninsula, and several seen on the wing at Anahuac NWR.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Just one seen on entire trip. Bird seen on last day at Bolivar Flats. It was carrying a fish.

White-tailed Kite *Elanus leucurus*

One seen hovering over fields along Retillon Rd (access to Bolivar Flats) on both visits.

Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus hudsonius*

Common and seen almost daily over open fields and marshes, especially at Anahuac NWR.

Cooper's Hawk *Accipiter cooperi*

One seen in flight along hwy near Sabine Pass.

Red-shouldered Hawk *Buteo lineatus*

Two at W.G. Jones State Forest, where we watched one bird hunting along edge of pond. Two or more also noted at Tyrell Park in Beaumont.

Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus*

One adult seen on telephone pole along Patterson Rd at Taylor Bayou. Two more adults seen in flight over Beaumont as we picked up lunch.

Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni*

Several seen in open country. Most were immatures. Fairly regular at Anahuac NWR, but only ad. of the trip was seen over Beaumont as we picked up lunch on 18th.

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

Surprisingly few seen. One adult seen briefly by a couple of observers at W.G. Jones State Forest. Another, this time an ad. was soaring over visitors center at Anahuac NWR.

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*

One seen along Bolivar Peninsula on April 16th.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Seen briefly at High Island at Boy Scout Woods on 14th, then another at the drip at Sabine Woods on 18th.

Clapper Rail *Rallus longirostris*

Seen well crossing the road several times at Yacht Basin Rd on the Bolivar Peninsula. Also several noted at Texas Point NWR. Favors coastal wetlands.

King Rail *Rallus elegans*

Seen skulking in reeds at Anahuac NWR at Shoveler Pond. Fresh water inhabitant.

Sora *Porzana carolina*

Seen on both visits to Anahuac NWR. One also seen running across Retillon Rd, the access road to Bolivar Flats. Heard at 'Cattail Marsh' at Tyrell Park in Beaumont.

American Moorhen *Gallinula cachinnans*

Several heard at Anahuac NWR, but only seen at 'Cattail Marsh' at Tyrell Park in Beaumont.

American Coot *Fulica americana*

Common and seen on most freshwater marshes such as those at Anahuac NWR and at the Cattail marsh at Tyrell Park.

American Oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus*

A few seen at Rollover Pass on Bolivar Peninsula.

Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*

Common shorebird at marshes and wetlands throughout, especially prevalent at Anahuac NWR.

American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana*

Good numbers at Bolivar Flats and at Rollover Pass.

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*

Two seen in fields along S. Pear Orchard Rd near Anahuac, in ploughed fields.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Numerous at Bolivar Flats along the beach. Also good numbers on flooded fields at Anahuac NWR.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

Quite numerous at Rollover Pass, & Bolivar Flats, as well as in flooded fields at Anahuac.

Wilson's Plover *Charadrius wilsonia*

Several seen on trip, at locations such as Sea Rim State Park, Yacht Basin Rd, & Bolivar Flats.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*

Common and seen throughout tour in open fields and along shorelines.

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus*

Seen on both visits to Bolivar Flats. Endangered species.

Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata*

A single snipe seen at Anahuac NWR and at Texas Point NWR.

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*

Seen well at Bolivar Peninsula. This species generally favours brackish areas.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

Favouring fresh-water areas, we saw these at Anahuac NWR.

Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa*

Quite numerous along Bolivar Peninsula, especially at Rollover Pass.

Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius hudsonicus*

Recently split North America species. Seen well in flooded fields along Yacht Basin Rd and at Bolivar Flats.

Also numerous in flooded fields at Anahuac NWR.

Long-billed Curlew *Numenius americanus*

Up to four present in flooded fields along Yacht Basin Rd on Bolivar Peninsula on April 16.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*

Numerous along edges of pools and ponds, especially at Anahuac NWR.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*

Numerous along edges of pools and ponds, especially at Anahuac NWR. Seen side by side with Greater Yellowlegs several times for comparison.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*

This Green Sandpiper look-a-like was seen very well several times at the Anahuac NWR.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*

Just one seen on tour at Rollover Pass.

Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*

Numerous birds of the 'eastern' race seen well, especially at locations along the Bolivar Peninsula.

(Ruddy) Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Good numbers seen on visits to Bolivar Flats.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Common along sandy beaches at Bolivar Flats.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*

Seen in flooded fields at Skillern Tract at Anahuac NWR. Also seen at Cattail marsh at Tyrell Park in Beaumont.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*

Several seen at Bolivar Flats.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*

Seen in flooded fields at Skillern Tract at Anahuac NWR.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

Seen in flooded fields at Skillern Tract at Anahuac NWR.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina*

Quite numerous at Anahuac NWR and along Bolivar Peninsula.

Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus*

Good views had of this species in flooded fields at Skillern Tract at Anahuac NWR.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*

Three seen in grassy fields along roadway to Anahuac NWR.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*

Small flock seen in flight at Skillern Tract at Anahuac NWR. One seen well in ploughed field along S. Pear Orchard Road also.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*

Two brightly colored females seen in ponds at Skillern Tract at Anahuac NWR.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

A few seen at Rollover Pass and Bolivar Flats.

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus*

A few seen at Bolivar Flats.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*

The most common gull along Texas Coast, seen in great numbers along the Bolivar Peninsula.

Least Tern *Sternula antillarum*

Common along Texas Coast, where we saw many at Rollover Pass and Bolivar Flats.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*

Seen twice on the tour, with first sighting at Anahuac NWR and second sighting along Yacht Basin Rd.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

A few of these large red-billed terns were seen amongst Royal and other terns along the Bolivar Peninsula.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

Seen on both visits to Rollover Pass.

Cabot's (Sandwich) Tern *Sterna (sandvicensis) acuflavida*

Seen at Rollover Pass and at Bolivar Flats.

Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*

First noted over channel at Sabine Pass Battleground State Park. Large numbers present at Bolivar Peninsula locations such as Rollover Pass and Bolivar Flats.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*

A few seen at Anahuac NWR. Good numbers present at Rollover Pass and at Bolivar Flats.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Two preening at Bolivar on 19th.

Black Skimmer *Rynchops niger*

Large flocks gathered at Rollover Pass on Bolivar Peninsula.

Feral Rock Dove *Columba livia*

Common in urban and suburban areas throughout.

(Eurasian) Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common in towns and cities throughout.

American Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*

Common throughout.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica*

Seen several times, but first sighting was at Church's Chicken in Port Arthur.

Inca Dove *Columbina inca*

Best views were from the car park at Boy Scout Woods at High Island.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*

Two seen at Smith Oaks at High Island.

Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor*

First sighting was in a parking lot in Sabine Pass. A roosting bird was obliging at boardwalk at 'The Willows' at Anahuac NWR. At least two other birds seen here as well.

Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica*

Common migrant over Sabine Woods and High Island.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird *Archilochus colubris*

Only hummingbird regularly found in Eastern US. Quite numerous throughout and seen at W.G. Jones State Forest as well as migrant traps of High Island and Sabine Woods. Seen at feeders at visitors center at Jesse Jones Nature Park in Houston.

Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon*

First sighting at Smith Oaks at High Island was a brief flyover. Second view, of a perched view along entrance road to Anahuac NWR was much better.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*

One seen briefly at Smith Oaks at High Island on 17th, and up to three at Sabine Woods April 18th.

Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*

Easily seen at W.G. Jones State Forest N. of Houston. Also seen in pines at Tyrell Park in Beaumont.

Red-bellied Woodpecker *Melanerpes carolinus*

Fairly common in wooded areas. Seen at W.G. Jones State Forest, Jesse Jones Nature Park, Taylor Bayou and at Tyrell Park.

Downy Woodpecker *Picoides pubescens*

Seen several times including both visits to Sabine Woods, where we located a nesting bird. Also seen at W.G. Jones State Forest and at Tyrell Park in Beaumont.

Red-cockaded Woodpecker *Picoides borealis*

Just one seen on tour. Endangered and endemic specialist of pine forests of the southeastern USA, we saw a male at W.G. Jones State Forest, behind the office.

Pileated Woodpecker *Dryocopus pileatus*

Rumored to be nesting at W.G. Jones State Forest, though we couldn't find them. We did, however, have fantastic views of a male at Tyrell Park in Beaumont.

Eastern Wood Pewee *Contopus virens*

Fairly common at migrant traps. Seen at both High Island sanctuaries (Smith Oaks & Boy Scout Woods) and at Sabine Woods.

Acadian Flycatcher *Empidonax vireescens*

One seen at Jesse Jones Nature Park in Houston on 13th.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus forficatus*

Perhaps the most graceful and beautiful bird in Texas. Seen several times alongside highways, especially the road to Anahuac NWR.

Western Kingbird *Tyrannus verticalis*

One seen at Sabine Woods on April 16th.

Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus*

Common migrant at High Island, Sabine Woods and Anahuac NWR.

Great Crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus crinitus*

One seen briefly at Sabine Woods on April 15th, and another seen at Smith Oaks, 16th.

Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus*

Fairly common in open country where often seen along roadways and on fence lines.

White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus*

One visited drip at Sabine Woods, 15th. Also noted at drip at 'Purky's Pond' at High Island.

Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus*

Just one seen at Smith Oaks on 16th.

Philadelphia Vireo *Vireo philadelphicus*

One seen by one observer at Sabine Woods on 18th.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*

Common migrant at High Island sanctuaries and at Sabine Woods.

Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons*

Seen several times at High Island sanctuaries and at Sabine Woods.

Blue Jay *Cyanocitta cristata*

Common in wooded areas throughout.

American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos*

Small numbers seen in the Houston area on 13th.

Fish Crow *Corvus ossifragus*

A few noted at north fork of Taylor Bayou along Boondocks Rd, NE. of Winnie.

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*

Small flocks seen on first day around piney-woods N. of Houston. Flock of 40 or more seen behind our hotel in Houston 14th. Seen well perched through scope at Taylor Bayou on Boondocks Rd.

Carolina Chickadee *Poecile carolinensis*

Seen in W.G. Jones State Forest. Also noted at Sabine Woods and at Taylor Bayou.

Tufted Titmouse *Baeolophus bicolor*

Seen fleetingly at office area at W.G. Jones State Forest. Seen very well, later in trip along Patterson Rd at Taylor Bayou.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Seen by **leader only** overhead at Sabine Woods.

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*

Abundant migrant throughout.

Purple Martin *Progne subis*

Common around High Island and Sabine Woods.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*

Seen numerous times, with best sightings at Texas Point NWR and at Anahuac NWR.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Common throughout and seen daily.

Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*

Fairly common colonial nester. Several colonies under bridges along routes we drove including road to Anahuac.

Cave Swallow *Petrochelidon fulva*

A few seen amongst Cliff Swallows at bridge along road to Anahuac NWR. Cave Swallow has paler throat than Cliff.

Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris*

One bird showed nicely for us in reeds at Anahuac NWR on our final visit to the park. Otherwise several heard at Cattail Marsh at Tyrell Park in Beaumont.

Sedge Wren *Cistothorus platensis*

Heard at Rollover Pass on 19th.

Carolina Wren *Thryothorus ludovicianus*

Common in woods throughout.

Blue-grey Gnatcatcher *Polioptila caerulea*

A few mixed in with warbler flocks at High Island and Sabine Woods.

Brown-headed Nuthatch *Sitta pusilla*

Uncommon resident of piney-woods region of S.E. USA where it is endemic. A few were encountered at W.G. Jones State Forest.

Grey Catbird *Dumetella carolinensis*

Common migrant at Sabine Woods and High Island sanctuaries.

Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*

Common in open areas throughout. The State Bird of Texas!

Brown Thrasher *Toxostoma rufum*

Large, long-tailed and rather secretive, this species was encountered on two visits to High Island.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Abundant throughout.

Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis*

Pair of these lovely birds seen near visitor center at W.G. Jones State Forest. Also seen at Tryell Park in Beaumont.

Veery *Catharus fuscescens*

One seen skulking on ground at Sabine Woods.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*

One encountered briefly at Smith Oaks at High Island on 17th.

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*

One seen well on ground beneath large oak tree at Sabine Woods on 18th.

Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina*

Small numbers present at High Island sanctuaries and at Sabine Woods.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Common in urban and suburban areas throughout.

Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera*

Seen by a few at the drip at Purky's Pond at High Island. Also glimpsed by one or two observers at Smith Oaks on 16th. Seen nicely at Sabine Woods on 18th.

Blue-winged Warbler *Vermivora cyanoptera*

Just one, a male, seen briefly at Sabine Woods on 18th.

Tennessee Warbler *Leiothlypis peregrina*

Most common warbler at migrant traps. On 16th, an estimated 600 were present at Smith Oaks!

Northern Parula *Setophaga americana*

A few seen here and there at migrant traps of High Island and Sabine Woods. Birds presumably on breeding territory were found at N. Fork of Taylor Bayou, and at Jesse Jones Nature Park in Houston.

Chestnut-sided Warbler *Setophaga pensylvanica*

Small numbers, all males, noted at High Island and at Sabine Woods.

Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*

One bright male visited the drip several times at Boy Scout Woods on 16th. A female was seen at Sabine Woods on 18th.

Blackpoll Warbler *Setophaga striata*

One male foraging over covered picnic area at Sabine Woods, 18th.

Bay-breasted Warbler *Setophaga castanea*

One lovely male seen at Smith Oaks on 16th.

Blackburnian Warbler *Setophaga fusca*

Several seen at High Island sanctuaries and Sabine Woods. Most, if not all, were males.

Cerulean Warbler *Setophaga cerulean*

Leader only at Smith Oaks on 16th, but seen well by group at Sabine Woods on April 18th.

Black-throated Green Warbler *Setophaga virens*

Common migrant throughout at High Island and Sabine Woods.

Yellow-throated Warbler *Setophaga dominica*

Seen nicely along Cypress Boardwalk at Jesse Jones Nature Park in Houston. Also noted at Smith Oaks and a male was watched singing in the scope at Taylor Bayou on 18th.

Pine Warbler *Setophaga pinus*

Seen well only at W.G. Jones State Forest N. of Houston.

Palm Warbler *Setophaga palmarum*

Two seen well at Sabine Woods on 15th.

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*

Small numbers seen at High Island and Sabine Woods.

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*

Small numbers seen at High Island and Sabine Woods.

Prothonotary Warbler *Protonotaria citrea*

Seen well along Cypress Boardwalk at Jesse Jones Nature Park in Houston. Also seen well at Taylor Bayou along Boondocks Rd & Patterson Rd. At migrant traps of High Island and Sabine Pass, small numbers seen.

Worm-eating Warbler *Helmitheros vermivorum*

Seen on two or three occasions at High Island sanctuaries. Also seen well at Sabine Woods on April 18th.

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*

Seen briefly on ground at the drip at Purky's Pond at Boy Scout Woods on 16th. One or two seen well walking through dead leaves at Sabine Woods on 18th.

Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis*

A few seen around edges of ponds at High Island and Sabine Woods.

[Kentucky Warbler *Geothlypis formosus*

Leader only on 18th at Sabine Woods.]

Canada Warbler *Cardellina canadensis*

One male seen well at Smith Oaks on 16th.

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*

Seen coming to drip at Sabine Woods on April 15th. Seen in marshes of Anahuac NWR.

Hooded Warbler *Wilsonia cintrina*

Small numbers present. Usually on or near the ground, we ran into them along trails at High Island and Sabine Woods.

Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla*

One female at the drip at Purky's Pond at Boy Scout Woods on 14th was the only one for the tour.

Yellow-breasted Chat *Icteria virens*

Seen by some of group at the drip at Boy Scout Woods on 17th.

Orchard Oriole *Icterus spurius*

Common at Sabine Woods and High Island. Good numbers visited 'the drip' at Boy Scout Woods, High Island.

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula*

Common migrant at High Island and at Sabine Woods. Also several noted at 'The Willows' at Anahuac

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*

Common and seen daily.

Bronzed Cowbird *Molothrus aeneus*

One male leader only at Anahuac NWR 'shop' on April 14th. Male seen briefly by rest of group at feeders at High Island on 19th.

Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*

Common and seen daily in marshes and wetland areas.

Common Grackle *Quiscalus quiscula*

Common at High Island, Sabine Woods and Anahuac.

Great-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus mexicanus*

Common and seen daily.

Boat-tailed Grackle *Quiscalus major*

Common and seen most days near Gulf Coast. Prefers coastal marshes.

Eastern Meadowlark *Sturnella magna*

Fairly common in open grassy areas throughout tour. Only meadowlark present here at this time of year.

Swamp Sparrow *Melospiza georgiana*

One seen along Yacht Basin Rd through the scope on April 16th.

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*

One seen briefly at Jesse Jones Nature Park in Houston. Also fairly common at High Island.

Harris's Sparrow *Zonotrichia querula*

One seen by one observer at the drip at Boy Scout Woods on 14th.

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis*

Fairly common in open grassy country.

Seaside Sparrow *Ammodramus maritimus*

Several seen in reeds at Texas Point NWR on 15th.

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow *Ammodramus nelsoni*

One seen exceptionally well in reeds along Yacht Basin Rd on Bolivar Peninsula on April 16.

Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra*

Fairly common at migrant traps such as Sabine Woods and High Island. First seen at W.G. Jones State Forest.

Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea*

Fairly common at Sabine Woods and High Island. An A-list migrant with vivid colours.

Dickcissel *Spiza americana*

One seen through scope along Yacht Basin Rd on 16th. A male sang from fence along S. Pear Orchard Rd near Anahuac, April 19th.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

Fairly common at Sabine Woods and High Island.

Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis*

Common throughout.

Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea*

First seen at Taylor Bayou where female perched just long enough for us to see in the scope. Males and a female were seen on last day foraging in grass along Bolivar Peninsula.

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*

Numerous at migrant traps; Sabine Woods and High Island.

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris*

Female seen at the drip at Boy Scout Woods on 14th. Several males seen two consecutive days at Smith Oaks.

House Finch *Carpodacus mexicanus*

A few seen around our hotel in Houston where they appeared to be nesting in a decorative Cedar.

MAMMALS

Striped Skunk *Mephitis mephitis*

Eastern Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*

Eastern Fox Squirrel *Sciurus niger*

Swamp Rabbit *Sylvilagus aquaticus*

White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus*

Coyote *Canus latrans*

Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*

BUTTERFLIES

Giant Swallowtail *Papilio cresphontes*
Palamedes Swallowtail *Papilio palamedes*
Spicebush Swallowtail *Papilio troilus*
Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*
Gulf Fritillary *Agraulis vanillae*
Question Mark *Polygonia interrogationis*
Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*
Mourning Cloak *Nymphalis antiopa*
Monarch *Danaus plexippus*
Funereal Duskywing *Erynnis funeralis*

REPTILES

American Alligator *Alligator mississippiensis*
Green Anole *Anolis carolinensis*
Brown Anole *Anolis sagrei*
Red-eared Slider *Trachemys scripta elegans*
Snapping Turtle *Chelydra serpentina*
Northern Water Snake *Nerodia sipedon*