

USA: Texas

High Island & Gulf Coast Migration

Thu 11th – Fri 19th April 2013



Trip photos (clockwise, from top left): Roseate Spoonbills were seen well and on most days • Boat-tailed Grackles like the coastal marshes • A Wilson's Plover on the beach at Bolivar • Two Royal Terns – we saw many on the Bolivar Peninsula • A Sora out in the open • A Red-eared Slider seen our first day © all photos leader Chris Charlesworth/Limosa Holidays

**report compiled by tour leader:
Chris Charlesworth**

Trip Diary

Tour Leader: Chris Charlesworth

with Brian & Muriel Bailey, Nicola Duckworth, and Tony & Liz Hale

The Texas Gulf Coast in April is a haven for both birds and birders. In spring, it attracts many tired migrants that have tracked north across the Gulf of Mexico on their migration towards breeding grounds – and that is partly why the Limosa group was there. Following our two days in the southern Texas forests, we headed to the coast, where we saw 27 species of American warblers!

Thursday 11 April

After their journey, I met the tour participants in the arrivals hall at George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston just before 4pm. We made the short transfer back to our hotel, and some of us wandered around the grounds to see what birds we could see. Overhead were numerous swallows including Cave, Cliff and Barn; ubiquitous Great-tailed Grackles, Starlings, Collared Doves and House Sparrows seemed to be everywhere right from the get-go. Northern Mockingbirds, Blue Jays, Northern Cardinals and a few White-winged Doves were also noted, while on a small pond behind the hotel was a single Snowy Egret. A few terrapins, known locally as Red-eared Sliders, were basking in the sun and in the sky above were Turkey and Black Vultures, Osprey and Red-tailed Hawks. After a delicious meal at the Olive Garden we made our way back to the hotel, but not before we saw two distant Roseate Spoonbills flying off into the sunset.

Friday 12 April

After breakfast this morning we emerged from the hotel and were greeted by blue skies and cool temperatures. A male and two female House Finches were frolicking about the fringe of the parking lot and we saw their nest hidden away in an ornamental Cedar. As we made our way towards our first birding stop we noted some Black-bellied Whistling Ducks and a Red-tailed Hawk alongside the road. Once we arrived at W.G. Jones State Forest the birds started appearing as if on cue.

As soon as we hopped out of the van we spotted our first Eastern Bluebirds as they gathered food for nestlings in nestboxes put up just for them. Pine Warblers sang lazily from the Loblolly Pines, while Northern Cardinals seemed to appear around every corner. Once we had found a nice tall patch of pines we started seeing some woodpeckers: a pair of stunning Red-headed Woodpeckers sat out in the open gathering warmth from the morning sun; and after a little searching we found two Red-cockaded Woodpeckers quietly working away on a pine trunk. This is the 'speciality' bird of Jones State Forest, as is another pine forest specialist, the Brown-headed Nuthatch, which was seen quite well today. Other common species included Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina and House Wrens, Chipping Sparrow, American Kestrel and several noisy Blue Jays. As we watched the sky overhead we tallied Broad-winged Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Black and Turkey Vultures and one lonely Mississippi Kite. All agreed our first stop would be hard to top!

We picked up lunch at a nearby sandwich shop then returned to the park for a little walk around Middle Lake before lunch. The birding continued to be excellent, and as the day warmed up butterflies began to emerge. We saw several butterfly species here including impressive Palamedes and Eastern Tiger Swallowtails, Cloudless Sulphurs, Red Admiral, Painted Lady and the aptly named Goatweed Leafwing, which is bright red above and very much like a dead leaf below when the wings are folded. We saw Eastern Grey Squirrels dashing about the forest and a Raccoon as it fled the scene into the woods. But now for the birds. We began with a nice flock of migrants including several Cedar Waxwings, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Blue-headed Vireo and White-throated Sparrows. We then stopped for a picnic in open woodland, beneath the shade of some tall oaks and after lunch we continued on our way, picking up Red-bellied and Downy Woodpeckers and a little group of Pine Siskins visiting a feeding station.

Our final stop today was at Jesse Jones Nature Park, where near the visitors center we saw both male and female Ruby-throated Hummingbirds coming to drink from the nectar feeders. Overhead, a Red-shouldered Hawk wailed away as it circled in the afternoon thermals; looking down, a Brown Thrasher was seen alongside the path before it disappeared into the brush. We then made our way to the Cypress Boardwalk, where after a little searching Nicola spotted our target, the male Prothonotary Warbler. Not long after, a stunning male Northern Parula popped up right in front of us, drawing ‘ooooh’s and ‘aaah’s from us all.

Red-bellied Woodpeckers were rather noisy in the big trees here, and we were fortunate enough to see North America’s largest living woodpecker, the Pileated Woodpecker as it foraged on a dead tree. Two male Summer Tanagers made an appearance, one a full breeding male decked out in bright red, the other a first year male coloured in splotchy red and yellow. Thinking we had ‘seen it all’ we headed back to the parking lot where just as we got into the van, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo began to call. Out of the van we got, and eventually had great looks through the ‘scope at one of at least three Yellow-billed Cuckoos sitting very still among the leaves above us.

Being Friday night, restaurants in the area were busy so we had to wait a little bit to be seated at the Saltgrass Steakhouse. In the end, we all agreed the food was worth the wait!

Saturday 13 April

Just after dawn we met outside and again did a little birding around the small pond behind our hotel. A few of us were fortunate to see a Lark Sparrow alongside the parking lot, but it disappeared before everyone could see it. A pair of Solitary Sandpipers chased one another about the pond, alighting only briefly. A Snowy Egret also lurked around the edges of the muddy pool, while a pair of Blue-winged Teal was also noted. A male Wood Duck made a brief pass overhead also. A large assembly of Cedar Waxwings took in the morning sunlight from the top of a tree, offering us nice ‘scope views.

Our drive from Houston to Winnie took a little over an hour, and once in Winnie, we stopped at our hotel, checked in and dropped off our baggage, then picked up sandwiches for lunch at a nearby store. As we followed Hwy 124 south towards the coast, we saw our first Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, sporting extravagant long forked tails and beautiful pink colors under their wings. Also noted were several Eastern Kingbirds and a couple of Eastern Meadowlarks. A female-type Northern Harrier glided over the grassy fields here as well.

We then made an unexpected detour, or some might say the leader took a wrong turn. This detour turned out to be worthwhile as we saw some very nice birds along FM Rd 1941. Included were our first Red-winged Blackbirds, Loggerhead Shrikes, and Crested Caracaras! In a ploughed field we spied a pair of American Golden Plovers, one of which was heading into breeding plumage. Alongside the plovers were Semipalmated Sandpipers and Greater Yellowlegs.

Once we were back on track, we arrived at Skillern Track, which is a part of the world-famous Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. Flooded fields here were covered in masses of waders including Long-billed Dowitchers, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Stilt Sandpipers, Dunlin, Black-necked Stilts and the rarest of all a Ruff! Also on the ponds here we saw masses of Fulvous Whistling Ducks, with one lonesome Black-bellied Whistling Duck mixed in. There were oodles of Blue-winged Teal, along with a few Shovelers and Mottled Ducks also.

For a picnic, we stopped at the visitor’s area at Anahuac where all was enjoyable, except for a rather strong wind. Several Barn Swallows were building nests above our heads in the shelter where we ate lunch; after a quick look in the little shop, we made our way around Shoveler Pond. We were treated to good but quick looks at two inquisitive King Rails as they belted out their raucous calls from the reeds. American Moorhens, Purple Gallinule, and American Coot were all noted. We saw our first Boat-tailed Grackles here, told apart from the more common Great-tailed Grackle by eye color and head shape.

Hérons and egrets were numerous and included Tricolored, Green and Great Blue Herons, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Snowy, Great White and Cattle Egrets, and a single American Bittern. A number of large and lazy American Alligators basked in the sun along the banks of the channels as we drove. A male Common Yellowthroat, a small yellowish warbler with a black mask, common in marshes across the continent, played hide and seek with us but eventually offered up nice views. The waders just kept appearing as we made our way around the pond, where we saw several Wilson's Phalarope, Grey Plovers and a Willet.

Our final birding stop of the day was at High Island's Boy Scout Woods, a sanctuary run by the Houston Audubon Society. According to the locals, it was a slow day for migrants in the park, but we saw a few brilliant birds such as Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Red-eyed Vireo, Great Crested Flycatcher, Grey Catbird, Prothonotary Warbler, Orchard Oriole, and several electric-blue Indigo Buntings. To finish off a spectacular day of birding we had a nice dinner at a local Cajun restaurant.

Sunday 14 April

Bright eyed and bushy tailed, so to speak, we left the hotel in Winnie just after 7am, then drove south through High Island to the Bolivar Peninsula, where we spent the morning. Our first stop was at Rollover Pass, where a very impressive collection of birds was gathered and waiting to be seen by our eager group. A lovely Reddish Egret with his 'punk hairdo' was sitting close to shore on a sandbar alongside masses of Black Skimmers and American Avocets. The sandbar was also covered in assorted terns including Caspian, Royal, Cabot's, Least, Forster's and Common! A few Ring-billed Gulls and American Herring Gulls were mixed in with the scores of Laughing Gulls. Waders here included our first American Oystercatchers, Western Sandpipers, Sanderling and Semipalmated Plover. Groups of Brown and American White Pelicans were numerous as well. Fantastic!

Our next stop, along Yacht Basin Rd was very good also, with fields covered in waders such as Grey Plover, Wilson's Plover, Stilt Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Pectoral Sandpiper and Hudsonian Whimbrel. An attractive Tricolored Heron, formerly known as 'Louisiana Heron', stalked through the grasses, with only his skinny snake-like neck poking above the vegetation. Sedge Wrens sang from the marsh, but remained hidden as they so often do. High overhead a Peregrine soared by, while Scissor-tailed Flycatchers sallied out for bugs from a dead tree. We watched a White-tailed Kite hover above the fields, then descend and land on a power line for us to view it through the 'scope. The highlight here, however, was a boisterous Clapper Rail that came right out in the open and gave us excellent views before slinking off into the marsh.

After a coffee break in the town of Crystal Beach, we made our way to the Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary, stopping on the way to look at some splendidly coloured Roseate Spoonbills as they fed in pools alongside the road. Once at the flats we drove along the beach, stopping to view flocks of Sanderling, Ruddy Turnstone, Willet and a few endangered Piping Plovers. In the protected section of the beach where no cars can drive, we had masses of waders including several thousand American Avocets. Also in great numbers were various terns and gulls. A Red Knot was watched scurrying about the beach and we noted its brick red breeding plumage was just beginning to come in. Nicola spotted a Black Tern roosting on the beach, which was a new bird for the trip list.

Our rumbling tummies told us it was time for lunch so we headed back towards Crystal Beach, but not before we saw our first Swainson's Hawks gliding overhead. After lunch we returned to High Island for the afternoon, beginning with a stop at Boy Scout Woods and the famous 'drip'. Action was very steady at the drip this afternoon and all sorts of colourful birds vied for our attention. There were up to eight Indigo Buntings bathing and drinking; bright-red Summer Tanagers came in for a sip, as did numerous Orchard Orioles and a couple of Brown Thrashers. Other drip visitors included Tennessee and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Red-eyed Vireo, White-throated Sparrow and a secretive Northern Waterthrush. Somebody yelled out 'Swallow-tailed Kite' and about 30 people quickly cleared off the bleachers and peered skyward. Sure enough, the most elegant of America's kites, was sailing overhead on the light breeze.

After all the action had died down for a little, we started to make our way back to the van. We didn't get far however before we were alerted to the presence of a roosting Common Nighthawk near the park entrance. As we were watching the nighthawk, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo was spotted and we got it in the 'scope, realizing it was gobbling down a lizard! Also in the vicinity of the park entrance we saw a Western Kingbird, some Inca Doves, as well as our first Black-throated Green Warblers.

At Smith Oaks, the other main sanctuary at High Island, we walked the trails and tracked down some interesting avian delights. Our first views of Yellow-throated Vireo were had here, as were Red-breasted Nuthatch and a lovely Nashville Warbler. We watched a Nine-banded Armadillo as it shuffled along in the undergrowth. Seemingly unaware of our presence, the armadillo walked to within a few feet of us then disappeared under the boardwalk upon which we were standing.

We had dinner at Tony's BBQ, then returned to the hotel for some much needed rest.

Monday 15 April

Overcast skies were encountered this morning, but by mid-morning it was warm and sunny. Later on in the day, just as we returned to our hotel, it became overcast and a light drizzle began to fall. Temperatures today made it up towards 25 degrees Celsius and there was high humidity.

Birding was great again, and we started off along Boondocks Road at Taylor Bayou. Amongst the towering Bald Cypress in the swamp we found a lovely little Yellow-throated Warbler, which was accompanied by a Prothonotary Warbler. A male Blue Grosbeak was seen along a gravel drive, and a few White-winged Doves made their cameo appearance for the group. The dirty, slow-moving waters of the bayou, lined with tall trees on either side made for a picturesque scene this morning. Try as we might to find a Fish Crow, we could only find American Crows in this area.

We drove into Port Arthur, where we picked up sandwiches, then made our way through the maze of oil refineries to Texas Point. Across the body of water known as Sabine Pass we could see the state of Louisiana. We walked along the dilapidated road, along which we saw several Seaside Sparrows in the marshy grasses. We stopped at a little patch of beach and were treated to close views of Least, Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers, which made for a great comparison of these three similar species.

Farther down the track we encountered a Palm Warbler, bobbing its tail frequently as Palm Warblers do. We enjoyed a picnic lunch at the coastguard tower near the end of the road, and scanning the sea we had two 'flyby' Lesser Scaup, as well as several playful Bottlenose Dolphins chasing ships in the canal. On the road as we drove back we spotted at least four Clapper Rails along the edges of the marsh. As we drove through the town of Sabine Pass, another crow was noted feeding on some roadkill: with the windows of the van open we could hear its frog-like call, the tell-tale call of a Fish Crow!

We spent the rest of the afternoon at Sabine Woods where a steady stream of migrants kept us occupied. Just as we entered the woods a couple of exciting species were spotted: a male Dickcissel and some outrageously coloured Painted Buntings! The buntings made a brief appearance before disappearing, but not to worry, by the time we left the woods we had all had good looks at them. The trees in the woods were alive with birds, including many Tennessee Warblers, Orchard Orioles, Red-eyed Vireos and White-throated Sparrows. We had a number of new warblers including the sought-after Cerulean Warbler, our first Yellow Warblers, and stunningly coloured Blackburnian Warblers. A waterthrush poked its way along the edge of a pond, and after much discussion it was decided it was a Northern Waterthrush. We sat at the drip for a little while, but nothing much showed, other than our first Orange-crowned Warbler, one of the more drab of America's wood warbler species. An Eastern Wood Pewee was new for us and we watched as it leapt out to catch a bug and returned to the same perch in typical flycatcher fashion. Several tiny Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were seen also as they fed on flowers of the common Lantana. As we drove back to Winnie in the afternoon the light drizzle fell so we felt we had timed things just right.

Tuesday 16 April

This morning we made our way back to the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. As we turned onto Fm Rd 1985, we immediately saw a small group of Dickcissel foraging along a fence line. As we drove on, we encountered the usual Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, Eastern Kingbirds and Loggerhead Shrikes seen along this route. At Skillern Track, our and a few other groups enjoyed watching the local 'star' Ruff again as it foraged in a wet field. The field was full of other waders, but none of which we had not seen before. We did add a White-fronted Goose here however, which was a leftover wintering bird that was a bit slow to move north. In the marsh at Skillern we were treated to nice views of several heron species including Yellow-crowned and Black-crowned Night Herons, and a Least Bittern. Overhead our second Swallow-tailed Kite of the tour sailed by. We had a nice look at a chattering Marsh Wren amongst the reeds, and a Virginia Rail strolled out from the vegetation into the open. A good start indeed!

We then made our way to Shoveler Pond, but first we stopped for a coffee at the shop. As we made our way around the pond we added a few new species to the list such as an adult Glossy Ibis, and some American Wigeon and Gadwall. Near our lunch stop we counted up to 20 baby Alligators sitting in the water beneath the boardwalk! Along the boardwalk we had views of both Sora and King Rails as well as the ubiquitous Boat-tailed Grackles, which were making a racket as usual.

For the afternoon we visited High Island once again, starting off with 'the drip' at Boy Scout Woods. There was quite a bit of action here, starting off with a lovely male Blue-winged Warbler. Our first good views of Baltimore Oriole were had here, and we watched as Painted Bunting, Brown Thrasher, Common Yellowthroat, Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Northern Waterthrush all visited the pool for a drink or bath (or both). A short walk about on the trails yielded Northern Parula and a nice male Prothonotary Warbler at Prothonotary Pond! A few Swamp Rabbits hopped about on the trails catching our attention whenever they appeared.

Our final stop of the day - at Smith Oaks - was a good one indeed! There were waves of migrants going through the treetops here, with such gems as Golden-winged, Cerulean, Blue-winged and Worm-eating Warblers and American Redstart mixed in. On the ground were Hooded and Kentucky Warblers, Ovenbird, Grey-cheeked and Hermit Thrushes to name a few. The mulberries were alive with Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles and Eastern Kingbirds. A male Painted Bunting allowed us excellent views as he sat motionless next to the path. After dinner at "Al T's" we made our way back to the hotel for the evening with great anticipation of another exciting day ahead.

Wednesday 17 April

Our last full day in Texas took us first to ploughed fields south of Winnie, where a group of six Buff-breasted Sandpipers were watched. We then returned to the famed Bolivar Peninsula, where we began at Rollover Pass. Chris's friends Gary and Marie Davidson met us there and had a Snowy Plover in the 'scope for us when we arrived. The usual masses of Black Skimmers, American Avocets, Willets, Laughing Gulls, terns and other waders were scattered across the flats and kept us occupied for some time. Our next stop was along Yacht Basin Road; here we were treated to great views of some very confiding Clapper Rails again, in exactly the same spot we saw one a few days before.

After a short coffee break, we visited Bolivar Flats and watched the spectacle as an estimated 5,000 American Avocets wheeled about in massive flocks on the beach. Mixed in were Marbled Godwits, Short-billed Dowitchers, a Red Knot, Sanderlings, Western Sandpipers and a plethora of gulls and terns. Sadly, we saw a perished dolphin that had washed up on the beach. After a stop at Fort Travis Park where we searched for more grassland waders, of which we found just two American Golden Plovers, we had our lunch.

The rest of the day was spent exploring High Island for the final time. We began at the heronry where numerous waders and Neotropic Cormorants were nesting. Great White Egret chicks were seen with parents tending to them, and we also saw some of their large pale blue eggs. The flamboyant Roseate

Spoonbill was seen up close and personal here as they nested as well. A couple of American Alligators waited patiently underneath the heron nests for fallen young birds. On the far side of the pond we noted an American Purple Gallinule.

Wandering the trails through Smith Oaks we found it a little slow today, but nonetheless there were a few bursts of excitement. Our first Blackpoll Warbler, a male, appeared for us in the trees above, along with more Cerulean, Black-and-white, Blue-winged, Tennessee, Yellow and Hooded Warblers. Red-eyed Vireos, Yellow-throated Vireos and the usual host of colourful Summer and Scarlet Tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Orchard and Baltimore Orioles and Indigo Buntings lurked around seemingly every corner.

We ended the day with an action-packed session at the drip at Boy Scout Woods. The drip was well stocked with colourful birds this afternoon including Wilson's Warbler, Painted Bunting, scores of Orchard Orioles, brilliant Baltimore Orioles, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, and Ruby-throated Hummingbird. A fine end to yet another great day exploring the bird-rich Upper Texas Coast!

Thursday 18 April

For our last morning in Texas we returned to Sabine Woods, where we spent a few hours roaming the woods in search of birds we had not yet encountered on the trip. We were not disappointed! A lovely male Chestnut-sided Warbler dangled from branches in the morning sunlight and was our first for the tour. Also, presenting a more challenging ID was a rather drab female Cape May Warbler, also our first. A Least Flycatcher made several appearances, as did an Eastern Wood Pewee, making for a good comparison. We caught a brief glimpse of a male Golden-fronted Woodpecker here, a species not normally seen on the Upper Coast, but rather farther south near the Rio Grande. Apparently this individual and its mate have been present for over a year.

We enjoyed our farewell lunch at a nearby restaurant in the town of Sabine Pass before driving back to Winnie to pick up our luggage. As we made our way back towards Houston, a steady rain began to fall. Upon arrival in Houston the temperature had dropped significantly. We said our farewells at the airport and the group caught their overnight flight to back to London, arriving back in London next morning (Friday, 19 April). Our final species count for the tour was 213 species of bird - an absolutely fantastic total for this relatively short trip "across the Pond"!

Chris Charlesworth

ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS RECORDED

(Total of 213 bird species recorded by group)

Fulvous Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor*

Numerous on ponds and flooded fields at Anahuac NWR.

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna autumnalis*

Small numbers seen here and there, including at Anahuac NWR.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*

A late-departing bird seen at Anahuac NWR on April 16.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa*

One April 13 at Humble. Two seen in flight (pair) at Taylor Bayou on April 18.

Mottled Duck *Anas fulvigula*

Seen often in wetland areas.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*

Common on ponds and lakes.

Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

A few noted at Anahuac NWR, around the aptly named Shoveler Pond.

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Pair seen at Anahuac NWR.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Small numbers noted at Anahuac NWR.

American Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Small numbers noted at Anahuac NWR.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*

A couple seen in flight at Texas Point.

Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator*

One female noted at Rollover Pass and another female seen at Bolivar Flats.

Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*

One flew overhead at Rollover Pass on April 16.

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.

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 lone adult noted on small pond at Anahuac NWR.

Roseate Spoonbill *Platalea ajaja*

Quite common and seen most days in wetland areas.

American Bittern *Botaurus lentiginosus*

One seen in flight at Anahuac NWR, around Shoveler Pond.

Least Bittern *Ixobrychus exilis*

A couple seen well in marshy area at Skillern Tract, Anahuac NWR.

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Small numbers encountered at Anahuac NWR at Skillern Tract.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax violacea*

Seen in flight at Taylor Bayou, but seen well at Anahuac NWR at Skillern Tract.

Green Heron *Butorides virescens*

Seen almost daily, often in flight. We had our best views of a bird perched in a tree at Taylor Bayou.

[Western] 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 *Ardea alba*

Common anywhere water present.

Reddish Egret *Egretta rufescens*

Both white and 'reddish' morphs seen well in the shallows at the Bolivar Peninsula, at Rollover Pass and at the Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanct.

Tricolored Heron *Egretta tricolor*

Seen most days, especially well along Yacht Basin Road on the Bolivar Peninsula, and at the Anahuac NWR.

Little Blue Heron *Egretta caerulea*

Small numbers seen in wetland areas. Seen well at Taylor Bayou.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*

Common in wetland areas.

American White Pelican *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*

Flocks seen at Rollover Pass on the Bolivar Peninsula, and at Texas Point.

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*

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

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.

Double-crested Cormorant *Phalacrocorax auritus*

Seen on both visits to the Bolivar Peninsula.

Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga*

Seen by one observer along freeway east of Winnie.

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*

First noted along FM 1941 south of Winnie. Also seen on the Bolivar Peninsula and at the Anahuac NWR.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

One noted behind hotel in Humble on first day of tour, but seen just by a couple of observers. Another seen along freeway near Port Arthur from the moving vehicle.

White-tailed Kite *Elanus leucurus*

One bird seen well at Yacht Basin Road on Bolivar Peninsula.

Mississippi Kite *Ictinia mississippiensis*

One adult soared overhead at W.G. Jones State Forest.

Swallow-tailed Kite *Elanoides forficatus*

One over Boy Scouts Wood on April 14 and Skillern on April 16

Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus hudsonius*

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

Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus*

Just one seen, in flight at Jones State Forest, north of Houston.

Red-shouldered Hawk *Buteo lineatus*

One seen at Jones State Forest, and another at Jesse Jones Nature Park. Third sighting was at Taylor Bayou where we saw perched bird in scope.

Broad-winged Hawk *Buteo platypterus*

Up to three noted overhead at W.G. Jones State Forest, north of Houston.

Swainson's Hawk *Buteo swainsoni*

Several seen along roads through open farmland S. of Winnie and towards Anahuac NWR.

Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*

Seen almost daily, most often along telephone poles beside the freeway.

American Kestrel *Falco sparverius*

Just one noted on trip, a single bird overhead at W.G. Jones State Forest.

Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*

One overhead along Yacht Basin Road on Bolivar Peninsula.

Clapper Rail *Rallus longirostris*

Seen very well at Yacht Basin on Bolivar Peninsula. Also seen along road at Texas Point.

King Rail *Rallus elegans*

Several heard in the Anahuac NWR area, but just one seen.

Sora *Porzana carolina*

Our first Sora dashed across the road in front of us at Texas Point. We later had good looks at one at Anahuac NWR Skillern Tract.

Virginia Rail *Rallus limicola*

One seen nicely at Anahuac NWR, Skillern Tract.

[American] Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica*

One seen briefly at Shoveler Pond, Anahuac NWR. Another seen quite well at the heronry at High Island.

American Moorhen *Gallinula cachinnans*

Seen well on both visits to Anahuac NWR. Also seen at High Island Heronry.

American Coot *Fulica americana*

Numerous at Anahuac NWR.

American Oystercatcher *Haematopus palliatus*

Small numbers seen at Rollover Pass and Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary.

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*

One noted with Grey Plovers along FM Road 1941 in plowed fields. Two also at Ft. Travis State Park on Bolivar Peninsula.

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

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

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

A few in plowed fields along FM 1941 south of Winnie. Also noted at Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary. Single bird seen well at Texas Point.

Wilson's Plover *Charadrius wilsonia*

Noted on Bolivar Peninsula at Yacht Basin Road, Rollover Pass and the Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary.

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus*

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

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus*

Small numbers of this endangered bird seen at Rollover Pass & Bolivar Flats Shorebird Sanctuary.

Snowy Plover *Charadrius nivosus*

Just one seen on trip, at Rollover Pass. Now treated as a separate species – it is 6% different genetically to Kentish Plover – which is not even its closest relative.

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*

A few seen here and there on the Bolivar Peninsula, with especially good looks at Rollover Pass.

Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius hudsonicus*

Small groups seen at Anahuac NWR, Yacht Basin Road and Texas Point.

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*

One seen well in grassy field along FM 1941 south of Winnie.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*

Most numerous at Anahuac NWR, but outnumbered by Lesser Yellowlegs.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*

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

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*

This Green Sandpiper look-a-like was seen just once, at the small pond behind our hotel in Humble.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius*

Two seen, both at Texas Point. One had spots, the other wasn't in full plumage yet.

Willet *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus*

Common along the coast of the Bolivar Peninsula, where we saw many at Rollover Pass & the Bolivar Flats Sanctuary. Also common at Texas Point.

[Ruddy] Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Good numbers seen on visits to Bolivar Flats. Also noted at Texas Point.

[Red] Knot *Calidris canutus*

One seen on both visits to Bolivar Flats.

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Common along sandy beaches at Bolivar Flats. Seen also at Texas Point.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*

Seen in flooded fields at Skillern Tract at Anahuac NWR. Seen well next to Least & Western Sandpiper at Texas Point. A few noted at Bolivar Flats.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*

Several seen at Bolivar Flats. Also seen well at Texas Point.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*

Seen in flooded fields at Skillern Tract at Anahuac NWR. Seen side by side with other 'peeps' at Texas Point.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

Seen in flooded fields at Skillern Tract at Anahuac NWR. Seen well at Yacht Basin Road on Bolivar Peninsula.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina hudsonius*

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. Also excellent views along Yacht Basin on Bolivar Peninsula.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*

Group of half a dozen found in fields along FM Rd 1941, south of Winnie.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

One 'Reeve' at Skillern Tract, Anahuac NWR. A rare bird in North America!

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*

Several seen on both visits to Anahuac NWR.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

A few seen at Rollover Pass and Bolivar Flats.

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus*

A few seen along the Bolivar Peninsula and at Texas Point.

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*

Found at Yacht Basin on the Bolivar Peninsula, and at Anahuac NWR.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

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

[American] Black Tern *Chlidonias niger surinamensis*

Seen on both visits to Rollover Pass. Also noted offshore at Texas Point.

Cabot's Tern *Thalasseus acuflavidus*

Seen at Rollover Pass and at Bolivar Flats. Cabot's Tern is now regarded as a full species and molecular analysis suggests it is more closely related to Elegant Tern than Sandwich.

Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*

Numerous at coastal locations on the Bolivar Peninsula, and at Texas Point.

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri*

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

Common Tern *Sterna hiundo*

Seen at Rollover with various other species of tern

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.

Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*

Common in towns and cities throughout.

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*

Common throughout.

White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica*

Seen by some in flight over our hotel in Houston. Later seen by all at Sabine Woods.

Inca Dove *Columbina inca*

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

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*

Up to three seen at Jesse Jones Nature Park in Houston. Singles also noted at High Island's Boy Scout Woods and at Sabine Woods.

Common Nighthawk *Chordeiles minor*

Several single birds found roosting at High Island and at Anahuac.

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 Jesse Jones Nature Park in Houston, as well as at migrant traps of High Island and Sabine Woods.

Belted Kingfisher *Megaceryle alcyon*

First noted along small bayou near Anahuac. Later seen several times from the bus along Hwy 124 near High Island.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker *Sphyrapicus varius*

Our only one was sighted at Sabine Woods on the last day of the tour.

Red-headed Woodpecker *Melanerpes erythrocephalus*

Seen well at W.G. Jones State Forest north of Houston.

Red-bellied Woodpecker *Melanerpes carolinus*

Several found at W.G. Jones State Forest, north of Houston. Also noted at High Island and Sabine Woods.

Golden-fronted Woodpecker *Melanerpes aurifrons*

One male briefly seen at Sabine Woods where apparently they are nesting. This species normally doesn't occur much north of the Rio Grande.

Downy Woodpecker *Picoides pubescens*

One or two seen wherever there were woods, including W.G. Jones State Forest, Sabine Woods & High Island.

Red-cockaded Woodpecker *Picoides borealis*

Just two seen on tour. Endangered specialist of pine forests of the southeastern USA (endemic).

We saw them at W.G. Jones State Forest, behind the office.

Pileated Woodpecker *Dryocopus pileatus*

One seen very well atop a large dead tree at Jesse Jones Nature Park in Houston. Another seen at Taylor Bayou, near Winnie.

Eastern Wood Pewee *Contopus virens*

Uncommon this year, with single bird seen at Sabine Woods both visits.

Least Flycatcher *Empidonax minimus*

Noted on our last full day at Sabine Wood on April 18

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*

Just one seen at entrance to Boy Scout Woods at High Island.

Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus*

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

Great Crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus crinitus*

Just one noted on tour, at Boy Scout Woods, High Island.

Loggerhead Shrike *Lanius ludovicianus*

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

White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus*

Two seen at High Island, one at Boy Scout Woods and the other in Smith Oaks.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*

Fairly common migrant at High Island sanctuaries and at Sabine Woods.

Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons*

Single birds seen on three different visits to High Island.

Blue-headed Vireo *Vireo solitarius*

One at W.G. Jones State Forest on our hike to Middle Lake. Another seen at Smith Oaks.

Blue Jay *Cyanocitta cristata*

Common in wooded areas throughout.

American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos*

Small numbers seen in the Houston area as we traveled through, as well at Taylor Bayou.

Fish Crow *Corvus ossifragus*

One seen at north Fork of Taylor Bayou along Boondocks Road, northeast of Winnie.

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*

Seen at small pond behind our hotel in Houston. Large group also noted on Middle Lake Trail at Jones State Forest, as well as at Taylor Bayou.

Carolina Chickadee *Poecile carolinensis*

Numerous at Jones State Forest north of Houston. A few seen at Taylor Bayou near Winnie, and one seen at Sabine Woods.

Tufted Titmouse *Baeolophus bicolor*

Seen well at W.G Jones State Forest in the pineywoods.

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Our only two for the tour flew over on the Bolivar Peninsula.

Tree Swallow *Tachycineta bicolor*

Abundant migrant throughout.

Purple Martin *Progne subis*

Common around High Island and Sabine Woods.

Northern Rough-winged Swallow *Stelgidopteryx serripennis*

A few noted at Yacht Basin on Bolivar Peninsula, and at Texas Point.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Common throughout and seen daily.

Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*

Fairly common nester. Several colonies seen nesting under bridges along various roads including that towards Anahuac.

Cave Swallow *Petrochelidon fulva*

Two noted over small pond behind our hotel in Houston. Also, seen at nesting colonies under bridge near Anahuac.

Sedge Wren *Cistothorus platensis*

One popped up into view briefly in marsh at Texas Point.

Marsh Wren *Cistothorus palustris*

Several heard, but just one seen at Anahuac NWR.

Northern House Wren *Troglodytes aedon*

Two noted at W.G. Jones State Forest north of Houston.

Carolina Wren *Thryothorus ludovicianus*

First seen at Jones State Forest. Later encountered at High Island and Sabine Woods.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula*

Seen at Middle Lake on April 12

Blue-grey Gnatcatcher *Polioptila caerulea*

Pair seen along Middle Lake Trail at Jones State Forest. One also noted at High Island.

Brown-headed Nuthatch *Sitta pusilla*

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

Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta Canadensis*

Seen at Smith Oaks on April 14.

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*

Common this year and seen almost daily at migrant traps.

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*

Abundant throughout.

Eastern Bluebird *Sialia sialis*

Seen well near nestboxes at Jones State Forest. Resident pair also seen at our hotel in Winnie; a few seen at Taylor Bayou as well.

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*

At Smith Oaks on April 16.

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*

Small numbers at High Island sanctuaries and at Sabine Woods.

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*

One seen on the tour, at Smith Oaks, High Island.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*

Common in urban and suburban areas throughout.

American Goldfinch *Carduelis tristis*

Small numbers present at High Island and Sabine Woods.

Pine Siskin *Spinus pinus*

Seen at feeders at Middle Lake on April 12.

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*

One noted at Smith Oaks, High Island, and two seen on ground at Sabine Woods.

Worm-eating Warbler *Helmitheros vermivorum*

One seen briefly at High Island's Smith Oaks.

Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis*

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

Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera*

One lovely male seen at Smith Oaks, High Island.

Blue-winged Warbler *Vermivora cyanoptera*

Small numbers encountered at High Island and at 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 Road. Also at migrant traps of High Island and Sabine Pass.

Tennessee Warbler *Leiothlypis peregrina*

Numerous migrant at High Island and Sabine Woods.

Orange-crowned Warbler *Leiothlypis celata*

Only one on tour seen at Sabine Woods.

Nashville Warbler *Leiothlypis ruficapilla*

Single bird seen at Smith Oaks, High Island, and at Sabine Woods.

Kentucky Warbler *Geothlypis formosus*

Two brief encounters at High Island.

Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas*

Seen on both visits to Anahuac NWR.

Hooded Warbler *Setophaga citrina*

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

American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla*

Small numbers seen at High Island and Sabine Woods.

Cape May Warbler *Setophaga tigrina*

One faded female seen at Sabine Woods.

Cerulean Warbler *Setophaga cerulea*

Single birds seen on three occasions, Sabine Woods & High Island.

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 Taylor Bayou, and at Jesse Jones Nature Park in Houston.

Blackburnian Warbler *Setophaga fusca*

A number of stunning males were found, albeit in small numbers, noted at High Island and at Sabine Woods.

Yellow Warbler *Setophaga petechia*

Small numbers at High Island and Sabine Woods.

Chestnut-sided Warbler *Setophaga pensylvanica*

One seen, a male at Sabine Woods on our last day.

Blackpoll Warbler *Setophaga striata*

Single males noted at Smith Oaks, High Island, and at Sabine Woods.

Palm Warbler *Setophaga palmarum*

Two seen, one at Texas Point, the other at Sabine Woods.

Pine Warbler *Setophaga pinus*

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

Myrtle [Yellow-rumped] Warbler *Setophaga coronata*

Boy Scouts on April 14.

Yellow-throated Warbler *Setophaga dominica*

One seen well at Taylor Bayou near Winnie. Another seen well at Sabine Woods.

Black-throated Green Warbler *Setophaga virens*

Seen several times at High Island.

Wilson's Warbler *Cardellina pusilla*

One seen at 'the drip' at High Island, and another noted at Sabine Woods.

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.

Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*

Common and seen daily.

Bronzed Cowbird *Molothrus aeneus*

One male seen at Anahuac NWR.

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. The only meadowlark present here at this time of year.

Lark Sparrow *Chondestes grammacus*

Seen in the parking lot at Humble.

Lincoln's Sparrow *Melospiza lincolnii*

Up to two seen by small pond behind our hotel in Houston. One seen at Sabine Woods also.

Swamp Sparrow *Melospiza georgiana*

First noted at High Island's Smith Oaks. Later seen in marshes of Anahuac NWR and Texas Point.

White-crowned Sparrow *Zonotrichia leucophrys*

Fairly common migrant throughout.

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*

Fairly common migrant throughout.

Savannah Sparrow *Passerculus sandwichensis*

Fairly common in open grassy country.

Seaside Sparrow *Ammodramus maritimus*

Several seen in reeds at Texas Point NWR.

Chipping Sparrow *Spizella passerina*

One seen at W.G. Jones State Forest.

Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra*

Fairly common at migrant traps such as Sabine Woods and High Island.

Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea*

Fairly common at Sabine Woods and High Island.

Dickcissel *Spiza americana*

First seen at Sabine Woods, and later seen several times along road to Anahuac NWR.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

Fairly common at Sabine Woods and High Island.

Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis*

Common throughout.

Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea*

A couple encountered at High Island, but our best look at a male came from Taylor Bayou.

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*

Numerous at migrant traps; Sabine Woods and High Island.

Painted Bunting *Passerina ciris*

Small numbers of this stunning bird seen at High Island and Sabine Woods.

House Finch *Carpodacus mexicanus*

A few seen around our hotel in Houston where they had a nest in a decorative cedar.

MAMMALS

Striped Skunk *Mephitis mephitis*

Eastern Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*

Swamp Rabbit *Sylvilagus aquaticus*

White-tailed Deer *Odocoileus virginianus*

Bottlenose Dolphin *Tursiops truncatus*

Nine-banded Armadillo *Dasypus novemcinctus*

BUTTERFLIES

Giant Swallowtail *Papilio cresphontes*

Eastern Tiger Swallowtail *Papilio glaucus*

Palamedes Swallowtail *Papilio palamedes*

Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*

Cloudless Sulphur *Phoebis senna*

Goutweed Leafwing *Anaea andria*

REPTILES

American Alligator *Alligator mississippiensis*

Green Anole *Anolis carolinensis*

Brown Anole *Anolis sagrei*

Red-eared Slider *Trachemys scripta*

Common Snapping Turtle *Chelydra serpentina*