



TEXAS COAST MIGRATION SPECTACLE I

Apr 14, 2012 to Apr 20, 2012

John Coons

We were very fortunate to have hit the weather just right for our stay at High Island. We got dumped on in the early morning in the Piney Woods which curtailed some of our outing, but when we arrived at High Island we were met by a good number of migrants that had dropped in to see us following the rain. We were really busy that afternoon sorting through the good number of warblers, vireos, and tanagers, with a few Painted Buntings mixed in. The north winds that continued the next few days caused some of the migrants to hold over and new ones to arrive each day. We had started earlier in the Piney Woods and Big Thicket of East Texas where we found Red-cockaded and Red-headed woodpeckers on our first morning, along with the local Brown-headed Nuthatches. Driving east we hunted down some of the local breeding warblers and had nice looks at Hooded, Pine, Prairie, Prothonotary, Yellow-throated, and Northern Parula, as well as the much sought-after Swainson's Warbler. A pair of Barred Owls in the late afternoon put on a very nice show for us as they sailed in over a cypress-laden bayou and called to each other.

Afternoons on the coast were mostly spent chasing down the migrants, but in the mornings we checked the marshes, beaches and flooded rice fields of the area. We accumulated an impressive list of herons and egrets (all of them) with great looks at Least Bitterns hunting right next to the van. Piping and Wilson's plovers, American Avocets, Red Knots, Upland Sandpipers, and a single Long-billed Curlew were amongst the plethora of waders on the Bolivar Peninsula, which was still showing signs of Hurricane Ike from 2008, while Hudsonian Godwits, Whimbrels, Buff-breasted, Stilt, and Pectoral sandpipers showed well in the flooded rice fields.

No matter what group of birds you like best, whether it is grosbeaks, tanagers, orioles, thrushes, vireos, or flycatchers, it seems the migrating warblers are always the star of the show in the High Island area. We were treated to Blue-winged and Golden-winged nearly in the same binocular view, Cerulean and Blackburnian right overhead, as well as good numbers of American Redstarts, Black-throated Greens, Black-and-whites and, of course, Tennessees. It was a very fun week and continued the last morning when we found our first Hudsonian Godwits, Anhinga, and a wonderful Swallow-tailed Kite on our way to the airport. The small town hospitality and local culture and cuisine were also memorable. Hope to see all of you again soon.

--John

For more information about this tour, including future departures, visit our website at www.fieldguides.com. And to see this same triplist online, go to <http://www.fieldguides.com/triplists/mig12aLIST.pdf> and you will find the list in its entirety.

KEYS FOR THIS LIST

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

BIRDS

Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

BLACK-BELLIED WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna autumnalis*) – We saw several on our first afternoon and morning on the Coast then didn't see them again.

FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCK (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) – Fair numbers of these were seen at ponds and in the rice fields.

WOOD DUCK (*Aix sponsa*) – Two birds flew through Jones State Forest on our first morning.

GADWALL (*Anas strepera*)

AMERICAN WIGEON (*Anas americana*)

MALLARD (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

MOTTLED DUCK (*Anas fulvigula*) – Nice looks at a few pairs of these southeast specialties.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Anas discors*)

NORTHERN SHOVELER (*Anas clypeata*)

GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN) (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) – We saw a pair in a pond at Anahuac.

REDHEAD (*Aythya americana*) – Francois spotted one with a group of Lesser Scaup at Bolivar Flats.

LESSER SCAUP (*Aythya affinis*)

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER (*Mergus serrator*) – A few late birds were still around.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

NEOTROPIC CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) – This is by far the dominant cormorant by numbers along the Upper Texas Coast.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)

Anhingidae (Anhingas)

ANHINGA (*Anhinga anhinga*) – Francois found one perched in a cypress on the far side of Lake Charlotte.

Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*)

BROWN PELICAN (*Pelecanus occidentalis*)

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

AMERICAN BITTERN (*Botaurus lentiginosus*) – One was seen in the marsh at Anahuac NWR.

LEAST BITTERN (*Ixobrychus exilis*) – Great looks at a few individuals at Anahuac. This appears as a very colorful species when seen as well as our first.

GREAT BLUE HERON (*Ardea herodias*)

GREAT EGRET (*Ardea alba*) – The one with plumes that was doing a head bobbing display at the rookery was especially memorable.

SNOWY EGRET (*Egretta thula*) – Several seen in full breeding plumage that included brilliant colors on the bill, lores and feet.

LITTLE BLUE HERON (*Egretta caerulea*)

TRICOLORED HERON (*Egretta tricolor*)

REDDISH EGRET (*Egretta rufescens*) – We had good views of a white morph individual "dancing" in the tidal area at Rollover Pass.

CATTLE EGRET (*Bubulcus ibis*)

GREEN HERON (*Butorides virescens*)

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)

YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON (*Nyctanassa violacea*) – We enjoyed good close views at Tyrrell Park.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

WHITE IBIS (*Eudocimus albus*)

WHITE-FACED IBIS (*Plegadis chihi*)

ROSEATE SPOONBILL (*Platalea ajaja*) – Those at the rookery were even more gorgeous than usual.

Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

BLACK VULTURE (*Coragyps atratus*)

TURKEY VULTURE (*Cathartes aura*)

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)

SWALLOW-TAILED KITE (*Elanoides forficatus*) – We saw one flying over the forest at Lake Charlotte on our way to the airport. A good bird for Texas and one of the prettiest raptors in the world.

WHITE-TAILED KITE (*Elanus leucurus*) – A couple of individuals were seen on the Bolivar Peninsula.

NORTHERN HARRIER (*Circus cyaneus*) – A good number of these were still around.

COOPER'S HAWK (*Accipiter cooperii*)

BROAD-WINGED HAWK (*Buteo platyterus*)

SWAINSON'S HAWK (*Buteo swainsoni*)
RED-TAILED HAWK (*Buteo jamaicensis*)

Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

AMERICAN KESTREL (*Falco sparverius*) – Our first was at Jones State Forest in the Piney Woods.
MERLIN (*Falco columbarius*)

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)

CLAPPER RAIL (*Rallus longirostris*) – Good views of a couple of individuals at Anahuac.
SORA (*Porzana carolina*)
PURPLE GALLINULE (*Porphyrio martinica*) – A pair were seen at the pond at Smith Woods.
COMMON GALLINULE (*Gallinula galeata*)
AMERICAN COOT (*Fulica americana*)

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)

BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – We saw all plumages of this species, from full winter to full breeding dress.
AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER (*Pluvialis dominica*) – Francois spotted one in a flooded rice field.
WILSON'S PLOVER (*Charadrius wilsonia*) – We saw a good number of these on the Bolivar Peninsula.
SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (*Charadrius semipalmatus*)
PIPING PLOVER (*Charadrius melodus*) – Only a few of these threatened birds were seen. This was #600 for Carolyn.
KILLDEER (*Charadrius vociferus*)

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers)

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER (*Haematopus palliatus*)

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)

BLACK-NECKED STILT (*Himantopus mexicanus*)
AMERICAN AVOCET (*Recurvirostra americana*)

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)

SPOTTED SANDPIPER (*Actitis macularius*)
SOLITARY SANDPIPER (*Tringa solitaria*)
GREATER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa melanoleuca*)
WILLET (*Tringa semipalmata*)
LESSER YELLOWLEGS (*Tringa flavipes*)
UPLAND SANDPIPER (*Bartramia longicauda*) – We had great looks at one right next to the van in a grassy field on the Bolivar Peninsula.
WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*) – There were a good number of these seen.
LONG-BILLED CURLEW (*Numenius americanus*) – Francois found one in the coastal marsh while we were seeing the Nelson's Sparrow. Most of these would have departed by now.
HUDSONIAN GODWIT (*Limosa haemastica*) – We found three of these handsome shorebirds on our last morning. These were some of the first found this year near the coast.
MARbled GODWIT (*Limosa fedoa*)
RUDDY TURNSTONE (*Arenaria interpres*)
RED KNOT (*Calidris canutus*) – Great looks at about 25 individuals at Bolivar Flats. Most were in nice breeding plumage.
SANDERLING (*Calidris alba*) – Good numbers on the beaches.
SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER (*Calidris pusilla*)
WESTERN SANDPIPER (*Calidris mauri*) – Only a few were encountered.
LEAST SANDPIPER (*Calidris minutilla*)
BAIRD'S SANDPIPER (*Calidris bairdii*) – One lone bird was spotted by Francois in the first flooded rice field that we searched.
PECTORAL SANDPIPER (*Calidris melanotos*)

DUNLIN (*Calidris alpina*)

STILT SANDPIPER (*Calidris himantopus*) – Fair numbers of these were seen as well.

BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER (*Tryngites subruficollis*) – Great looks at a few birds on successive days in a drier than normal field near Anahuac. Along with Hudsonian Godwit and Upland Sandpiper this is one of the most sought-after shorebirds on the coast.

SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus griseus*)

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*)

WILSON'S SNIPE (*Gallinago delicata*)

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

BONAPARTE'S GULL (*Chroicocephalus philadelphia*) – Cynthia saw one along the coast.

LAUGHING GULL (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – Lots of these were seen daily along the coast.

RING-BILLED GULL (*Larus delawarensis*)

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

LEAST TERN (*Sternula antillarum*) – There were a good number of these small terns on the sandbars at Rollover Pass.

GULL-BILLED TERN (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) – We found two in a flooded rice field on our way to the airport.

CASPIAN TERN (*Hydroprogne caspia*)

BLACK TERN (*Chlidonias niger*) – There were more than the usual number of these seen along the Intracoastal Waterway.

COMMON TERN (*Sterna hirundo*)

FORSTER'S TERN (*Sterna forsteri*)

ROYAL TERN (*Thalasseus maximus*)

SANDWICH TERN (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*)

BLACK SKIMMER (*Rynchops niger*) – Always a great sight to see these whirling up as a group.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

ROCK PIGEON (*Columba livia*) [I]

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

MOURNING DOVE (*Zenaida macroura*)

INCA DOVE (*Columbina inca*) – These have moved into the High Island area in the last decade.

Cuculidae (Cuckoos)

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO (*Coccyzus americanus*) – Usually the more commonly seen cuckoo, our only one was spotted in the distance by Francois on our last morning.

BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*) – We had two good views of this much sought-after species at High Island.

Tytonidae (Barn-Owls)

BARN OWL (*Tyto alba*) – Great looks at three individuals flying overhead.

Strigidae (Owls)

EASTERN SCREECH-OWL (*Megascops asio*) – Twice we heard birds calling during the day but we could not lure them out. [*]

BARRED OWL (*Strix varia*) – We had a great experience during the day with first one, then a pair, of calling birds in the Big Thicket. This is one of the best bird sounds in nature.

Caprimulgidae (Nightjars and Allies)

COMMON NIGHTHAWK (*Chordeiles minor*) – We saw both flying birds and a couple of perched individuals during the day.

Apodidae (Swifts)

CHIMNEY SWIFT (*Chaetura pelagica*)

Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (*Archilochus colubris*) – We only had a few fly-bys.

Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

BELTED KINGFISHER (*Megaceryle alcyon*)

Picidae (Woodpeckers)

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) – Great looks at this wonderful woodpecker on our first morning in the field.

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER (*Melanerpes carolinus*)

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER (*Sphyrapicus varius*) – We saw one at Smith Woods at High Island. A late remaining individual.

DOWNY WOODPECKER (*Picoides pubescens*)

RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER (*Picoides borealis*) – We enjoyed wonderful looks at about five individuals on our first morning at Jones State Forest. One of the rarest North American birds this population is one of the most accessible anywhere.

PILEATED WOODPECKER (*Dryocopus pileatus*) – Good scope views of one along the Trinity River.

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE (*Contopus virens*)

ACADIAN FLYCATCHER (*Empidonax virescens*) – We heard a couple on the breeding grounds but saw at least two as migrants at High Island.

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER (*Myiarchus crinitus*)

EASTERN KINGBIRD (*Tyrannus tyrannus*)

SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER (*Tyrannus forficatus*) – Always a favorite.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – These seemed to be doing quite well this year. We found a pair with at least three young next to our motel in the Big Thicket area.

Vireonidae (Vireos)

WHITE-EYED VIREO (*Vireo griseus*) – A quite common song, we saw a couple of these here and there.

YELLOW-THROATED VIREO (*Vireo flavifrons*)

WARBLING VIREO (*Vireo gilvus*) – A fair number were seen along the Coast.

RED-EYED VIREO (*Vireo olivaceus*)

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

BLUE JAY (*Cyanocitta cristata*)

AMERICAN CROW (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*)

FISH CROW (*Corvus ossifragus*)

Alaudidae (Larks)

HORNED LARK (*Eremophila alpestris*) – One was seen in the sand above the beach at Bolivar Flats.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*)

PURPLE MARTIN (*Progne subis*)

TREE SWALLOW (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – Good numbers were migrating.

BARN SWALLOW (*Hirundo rustica*)

CLIFF SWALLOW (*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*)

Paridae (Chickadees and Tits)

CAROLINA CHICKADEE (*Poecile carolinensis*)

TUFTED TITMOUSE (*Baeolophus bicolor*)

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH (*Sitta pusilla*) – Nice looks at this local specialty at Jones State Forest then again the next day in the Piney Woods.

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

CAROLINA WREN (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*)

SEDGE WREN (*Cistothorus platensis*)

MARSH WREN (*Cistothorus palustris*)

Poliopitidae (Gnatcatchers)

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER (*Poliopitila caerulea*)

Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)

EASTERN BLUEBIRD (*Sialia sialis*) – This species has done well in recent years in the Piney Woods of east Texas.

VEERY (*Catharus fuscescens*) – One was seen by Warren at Boy Scout Woods.

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH (*Catharus minimus*) – Cynthia and Jeanne saw one at Boy Scout Woods.

SWAINSON'S THRUSH (*Catharus ustulatus*)

WOOD THRUSH (*Hylocichla mustelina*) – Always a treat to see this beautiful thrush.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

GRAY CATBIRD (*Dumetella carolinensis*) – Lots of these on all days on the Coast.

NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (*Mimus polyglottos*)

BROWN THRASHER (*Toxostoma rufum*) – Several Red Mockingbirds were seen.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

EUROPEAN STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*) [I]

Bombycillidae (Waxwings)

CEDAR WAXWING (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) – A small group was in the trees at Boy Scout Woods.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

OVENBIRD (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) – It took awhile to get a look at the bird walking about under the brush at Smith Woods.

WORM-EATING WARBLER (*Helmitheros vermivorum*) – We saw one at High Island after hearing a singing bird in the Big Thicket.

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (*Parkesia noveboracensis*)

BLUE-WINGED WARBLER (*Vermivora cyanoptera*) – We saw a few of these including one that was singing a quite unusual song that started with a trill.

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER (*Vermivora chrysoptera*) – A couple of these beauties were seen at Smith Woods.

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER (*Mniotilta varia*)

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER (*Protonotaria citrea*) – We had great looks at a few individuals on the breeding grounds in the Piney Woods and then a few late migrants along the Coast.

SWAINSON'S WARBLER (*Limnithlypis swainsonii*) – Good views of this skulker in the Big Thicket. This local specialty is always a treat to see well.

TENNESSEE WARBLER (*Oreothlypis peregrina*) – Good numbers of these at the migration traps along the Coast.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER (*Oreothlypis celata*)

NASHVILLE WARBLER (*Oreothlypis ruficapilla*)

KENTUCKY WARBLER (*Geothlypis formosa*) – We had a couple of quick sightings at High Island.

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (*Geothlypis trichas*)

HOODED WARBLER (*Setophaga citrina*) – Good views in the Big Thicket then a few more along the Coast.

AMERICAN REDSTART (*Setophaga ruticilla*) – A fair number were seen during and following our first day fallout at High Island.

CERULEAN WARBLER (*Setophaga cerulea*) – Great views of a couple of different males and at least one female. This was a good week for seeing this much-wanted species.

NORTHERN PARULA (*Setophaga americana*)

MAGNOLIA WARBLER (*Setophaga magnolia*) – Only one was seen.

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER (*Setophaga fusca*) – We had a couple of these dazzlers with the fallout at Smith Woods. This is, perhaps, the most colorful of the warblers but that is highly debatable.

YELLOW WARBLER (*Setophaga petechia*)

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER (*Setophaga pensylvanica*)

BLACKPOLL WARBLER (*Setophaga striata*) – Nice looks at an early male in the magic tree along Tuna Road where we saw the Dickcissels.

PINE WARBLER (*Setophaga pinus*) – This was a common voice in the Piney Woods.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (*Setophaga coronata*) – One late remaining bird was still around on our first afternoon at High Island.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER (*Setophaga dominica*) – We saw one on the breeding grounds then a late-migrant along the Coast.

PRAIRIE WARBLER (*Setophaga discolor*) – Another local breeding specialty, we saw a couple in the Big Thicket.

BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER (*Setophaga virens*)

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT (*Icteria virens*) – We had a nice perched individual at High Island where a few nest.

Emberizidae (Buntings, Sparrows and Allies)

SAVANNAH SPARROW (*Passerculus sandwichensis*)

NELSON'S SPARROW (*Ammodramus nelsoni*) – Good views of this specialty which seems late to still be along the Coast this late in the spring.

SEASIDE SPARROW (*Ammodramus maritimus*) – A handful of good views of another specialty.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW (*Zonotrichia albicollis*)

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

SUMMER TANAGER (*Piranga rubra*) – Good numbers of this and the following species at High Island. These two added a lot of color to the woods.

SCARLET TANAGER (*Piranga olivacea*)

NORTHERN CARDINAL (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*)

BLUE GROSBEAK (*Passerina caerulea*) – We caught up with this bird on our last couple of days at High Island.

INDIGO BUNTING (*Passerina cyanea*)

PAINTED BUNTING (*Passerina ciris*) – Surprisingly, we saw this almost gaudy species each day we were along the Coast.

DICKCISSEL (*Spiza americana*) – Good numbers arrived by the end of the week.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

EASTERN MEADOWLARK (*Sturnella magna*)

COMMON GRACKLE (*Quiscalus quiscula*)

BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus major*) – Nice studies of the dark-eyes and the rounder domed crown of this species.

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE (*Quiscalus mexicanus*)

BRONZED COWBIRD (*Molothrus aeneus*) – One male was hanging around the seed feeder at the RV Park at High Island.

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD (*Molothrus ater*)

ORCHARD ORIOLE (*Icterus spurius*) – Lots of these were moving through the woods.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE (*Icterus galbula*)

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

HOUSE SPARROW (*Passer domesticus*) [I]

MAMMALS

SWAMP RABBIT (*Sylvilagus aquaticus*)

EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

FOX SQUIRREL (*Sciurus niger*)

NORTHERN RACCOON (*Procyon lotor*)

INDIAN ELEPHANT (*Elephas maximus*) – Once again we saw this out-of-place creature in the Piney Woods.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Totals for the tour: 200 bird taxa and 5 mammal taxa