



THE WOOD DUCK



Newsletter #261

Lower Trinity Valley Bird Club

March 2022

www.LowerTrinityValleyBirdClub.org

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PO Box 6051 Liberty, Texas 77575

March Activities

- **LTVBC Virtual Meeting:** Thursday, March 10, 2022 at 6:30 pm as we prepare for spring migration and our March/April birding.
- **LTVBC Swallow-tailed Kite (STKI) watch:** We would like everyone to post their first of the season Swallow-tailed Kite on the LTVBC Facebook page.
- **March Field Trip: Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge, Eagle Lake, on Saturday, March 19, 2022.** This will be our first trip to the prairie chicken refuge.

It's time to pay
your membership
dues for 2022.
See last page.

Special Event Happening in March

It may not be a birding event, but it's not often a local person and event get highlighted on broadcast television.

From Stuart Marcus: The Texas Country Reporter folks who filmed the Moth Night Out Event at the Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge this past July will "supposedly" air the episode next Saturday, March 12. I say "supposedly" because the Houston CBS network airs Texas Country Reporter at 5:00 pm on Saturday. Well... that is also the last weekend of college basketball before March Madness starts (for those of you that are sports fans). That means CBS could preempt the airing and you might not see what a retired refuge manager (and folks that don't have anything better to do on a Saturday night) does in his spare time while hopefully trying to not make a fool out of himself!

Set your DVR and check out Stuart talking about moths!

KHOU Channel 11, 5:00 pm, Saturday, March 12

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Meeting Minutes February 10, 2022



The Lower Trinity Valley Bird Club met Thursday, February 10, 2022, via virtual meeting due to the COVID-19 Virus. Nine members were present at this month's meeting. President Gary Holmes called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM.

Treasurer's Report: Checking Account Balance: \$2,135.30
Savings Account Balance: \$1,047.80

Old Business:

- Duck Stamps for 2021-2022 (Lesser Scaup) will be available for purchase until the end of April. If you are interested in this year's duck stamp, please contact Shelli Ellerbe.
- Mont Belvieu Spring Outdoor Celebration will be April 30, 2022 from 10:00 AM until 2:00 PM. Stuart Marcus will get with Laurie Gonzales to see if she is interested in having a booth this year.
- The LTVBC Birding Adventure trip for 2022 will be August 18-23 to the Davis Mountains. This is a 6-day 5-night trip. Twenty people have signed up so far. Ten rooms have been reserved at Indian Lodge. Please make your reservations now and let Shelli Ellerbe know when you have made them.

New Business:

- Great Backyard Bird Count will be February 18-21, 2022.
- The LTVBC Annual Picnic will be in May. Shelli has volunteered to host the picnic unless someone else wants to host. Anyone interested in hosting the picnic should get in touch with Gary Holmes or Shelli Ellerbe.
- This month's field trip will be on February 19th to Paul and Colette Micallef's home.

Bird Tales: On Tuesday, February 8, 2022, Gary Holmes' BCA Environmental Science Class went to the Baytown Nature Center. Six bird club members also went on this trip. Everyone had a good time. Their best bird was a Bald Eagle.

Speaker Presentation: Gary Holmes gave a presentation on Sparrow identification for sparrows that can be found in Liberty County.

Since there was no more business to discuss, Lisa Holmes made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Shelli Ellerbe seconded, all agreed, and the meeting was adjourned.

Renie O'Connor
Secretary

2021-22 Field Trip Schedule	
Field trips - 3rd Saturday	
Day/Date	Location
Saturday, March 19, 2022	Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR Eagle Lake
Saturday, April 16, 2022	High Island, Bolivar, Anahuac
Saturday, April 23, 2022	Sabine Woods
Saturday, May 14, 2022	Picnic @ the Ellerbe's

Have you bought your 2021-2022 Duck Stamp?

Support wetland conservation, get your **Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp**. See page 8 for more information.



President's Message

by Gary Holmes

Hello Bird Club,

It is spring and time for our annual Swallow-tail Hawk watch. We would like everyone to post their **first of the season Swallow-tailed Kite (STKI)** on the LTVBC Facebook page. Usually, the kites arrive about mid-March so keep your eyes on the skies!

On February 8, we helped the BCA birders at the Baytown Nature center and identified over 40 species. Our February field trip to **Colette and Paul Micallef's** property was great! We identified 29 species with good looks at the Orange-crowned and Pine Warblers, and White-throated Sparrows on the feeders. While walking the property, we had a unique birding experience- 12 Ruby-crowned Kinglets mobbing an Inca Dove! We appreciate Collette and Paul hosting the trip.



BCA Birders at Baytown Nature Center

Our March field trip is to the **Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge, Eagle Lake, Saturday, March 19, 2022**. This will be our first trip to the prairie chicken refuge which has a driving loop and numerous trails to explore and bird. Due to Federal Covid guidelines, we are unable to get a tour to the booming grounds. The refuge manager will work with us to get a tour in Spring 2023.

Let us know when you see your first of the season Swallow-tailed Kite,

Gary

BCA and LTVBC at Baytown Nature Center February 8, 2022



BCA Birders with Lisa and Billie

A great time was had with the Baytown Christian Academy! Most of the kids got 35+ species. All had a fantastic view of the bald eagles. Thanks to Dennis Outlaw, Lisa Holmes, Shelli Ellerbe, Margo Taylor, and Billie Brinkley for helping the kids find and ID the birds.



Eleven of the fourteen BCA Students have identified the fifty bird species needed to complete the Baytown Birding Challenge. Thanks, LTVBC!



Shelli and Margo with their BCA birding group.



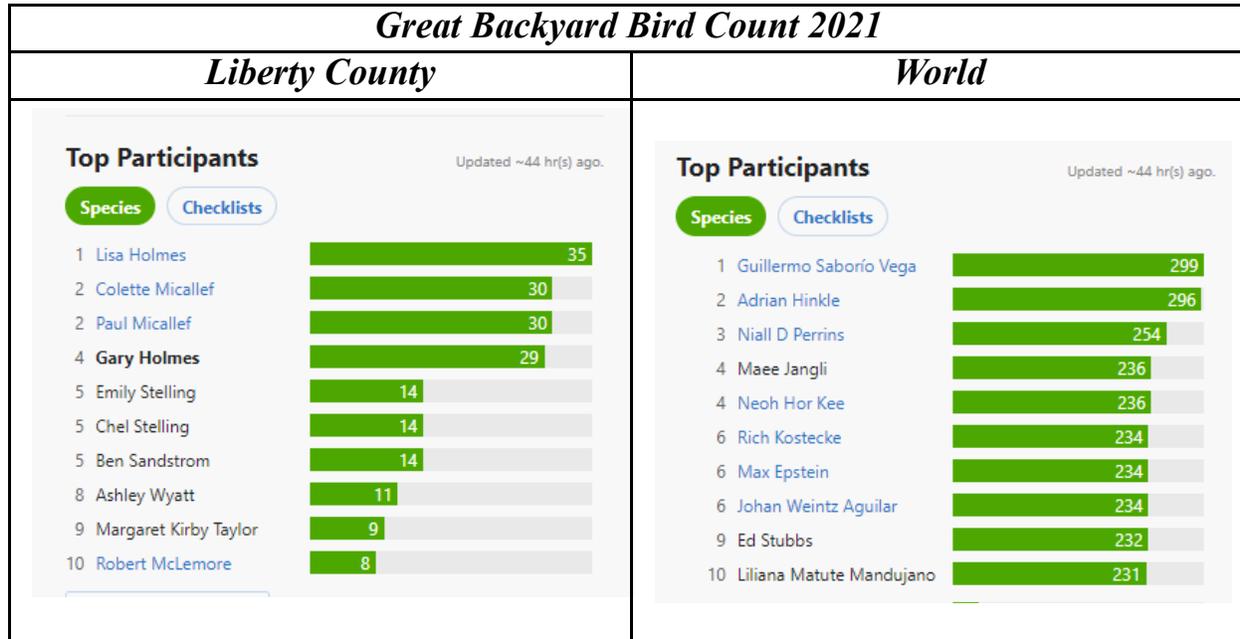
Margo with BCA Birders



BCA Birders with Gary

Great Backyard Bird Count-2022

Our participation in the **GBBC** decreased this year with only **five LTVBC members** and 6 checklists submitted in Liberty County. Worldwide current results are from 192 countries with 318,000 participants, and 7,019 species identified!



Rich Kostecke, our guide at Granger Lake, was the **6th ranked GBBC birder in the world** with 26 checklists and 234 species in four days in the Austin Area.

Go to GBBC website to view real time maps and to explore the data.

Great Backyard Bird Count

GBBC Top Countries			
<i>Rank- country</i>	<i># species</i>	<i># checklists</i>	
Columbia	1,240	1,863	
Ecuador	1,036	585	
India	1,022	39,252	2 nd in checklists
United States	689	196,088	1 st in checklists

A Remarkable Return: The Attwater’s prairie-chicken is bouncing back

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Apr 29, 2021

After decades of protection and conservation efforts, Texas’ critically endangered Attwater’s prairie-chicken population is at its highest since 1993. Officials with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy in Texas estimate the current population is at least 178 birds, with 89 males counted during the 2021 spring survey at the Service’s Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge and on private ranch lands participating in grassland management activities as part of the Conservancy’s [Refugio-Goliad Prairie Project](#).



While populations remain at extreme risk, this year’s count demonstrates a remarkable turnaround from near extinction in the wild just a few years ago.

The Attwater’s prairie-chicken, which is actually a member of the grouse family, was once extremely common in coastal grasslands of Texas and southwest Louisiana. Historic writings speak of Attwater’s prairie-chickens being so numerous that they were relied upon to provide fresh meat for cowboys working cattle distant from ranch headquarters.

Because of habitat loss due to woody species invasion and conversion to agriculture, cities and non-native pasture, the Attwater’s prairie-chicken disappeared from Louisiana early in the 20th century, and by mid-century were struggling to hang on in Texas. In 1967, the Attwater’s prairie-chicken became a member of the “class of ‘67” – among the first on the U.S. list of endangered species.

Beginning as early as 1937 with the closure of the hunting season, increasingly intensive efforts were undertaken to stabilize declining populations as the species rapidly approached extinction. Research was initiated to identify factors that were driving these declines, and work was undertaken to restore prairie grasslands infested by brush or otherwise made unsuitable for prairie-chickens.

In the early 1990’s a captive-breeding program was started to preserve as much genetic representation as possible from failing populations and to provide source stock for rebuilding wild populations. Still, for the next 25 years, wild populations remained on the brink of extinction, and wildlife officials were at a loss to explain why in the face of so much effort directed toward recovery of the species.

It was only the safety net provided by captive flocks at Texas zoological institutions like Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, the Houston Zoo, the Caldwell Zoo, the Abilene Zoo and now the Sutton Avian Research Center in Oklahoma, that prevented total loss of the species.

2021-22 Meeting Schedule		
Meetings - Second Thursday at 6:30 PM		
Date	Topic	Speaker/Event
Thursday, March 10, 2022	Prep for Spring Migration	Gary Holmes
No Thursday meeting in April		
No Thursday meeting, May Picnic		

Binocular Rescue by David Knutson

I want to share a recent experience of mine. I have had a pair of Eagle Optics Platinum Series 8X42 Ranger Binoculars which were gifted to me over 20 years ago and had proved to be exceptional optics. At the time, I had and still have a pair of ZEISS 10X50 B GAT P. The Zeiss served me well and the 10 power really helped me reach out to the birds. There were however two issues: armored meant rubber coated for protection and the armor compounded the weight issue of the higher magnification. Secondly, the close focus is something like 12 feet! My birding mentor, David Dauphin, warned us newbies against armored binocs due to the added weight factor; but clearly, I did not listen. In my defense, I was replacing a cheap pair of Nikon 10X50's that were as big as a Volkswagen Beetle and weighed about as much as one of them. I was unaware that I had a close focus issue until I had been birding for a few years and realized that on slow bird days I could still see butterflies, dragonflies, damselflies, etc. And I could study them in detail as long as they were 12 or more feet away from me! Enter the Rangers with lower magnification and no armor meant they were lighter. Close focus was 5 feet and optics were very good. It was love at first sight. I always carried both pair for my trips to High Island or Sabine Woods but only used the Zeiss for trips to the beach or Bolivar Peninsula where the birds were less approachable. Over the years many a deer or elk hunter at work would approach me when they were ready to upgrade their binocs. I would bring both pair for them to try on and out. At the time the Rangers were priced at 400\$ and the Zeiss at 1100\$. Needless to say, I sent Eagle Optics many new customers.



2nd year Bald Eagle from David's neighborhood.

I learned in 2017 that Eagle Optics was closing their doors at the end of the year. I was really disappointed and immediately tried to purchase a new pair of the same binocs, but they had sold out. I did buy a pair of 8X42 Ranger ED's and they are nice, lightweight and have decent optics but not comparable to the others. Warranty and repair work for all Eagle Optic products was transferred to Vortex Optics. What I did not know at the time was that the two companies were owned by the same man and operated out of a shared warehouse and retail space. The owner had elected to consolidate his businesses.

Three months ago, I had my favorite binocs on a table at our patio windows so I could keep an eye on any bird activity in the back yard. Somehow, I managed to knock them off the table and they landed hard on the left barrel. The barrel distorted to an egg shape, breaking the seal around the objective lens which had been displaced. I was devastated. My only hope was that Vortex could repair them with parts from another pair that they had been unable to fix. I sent them off and two weeks later I received notice that they were being returned in working order. When the package arrived, I tore into it and to my surprise they had sent me a new pair of Vortex 8X42 Viper HD binocs and a note that they were unable to repair my Eagles. Turns out that my Eagles had come with a VIP warranty which provided for replacement if they were not repairable. These new binocs are exceptional and I will be able to use them as I had previously done. And did I mention that the close focus is 5 feet! I contacted Vortex to thank them for their exceptional service and to see if this closed my VIP warranty on the original Eagles and the answer was surprisingly "no". It turns out that the warranty is for my lifetime. Let this serve as a reminder that you need to keep track of warranty information on any and all of your optics and consider this an unsolicited endorsement of the fine folks of Vortex Optics.

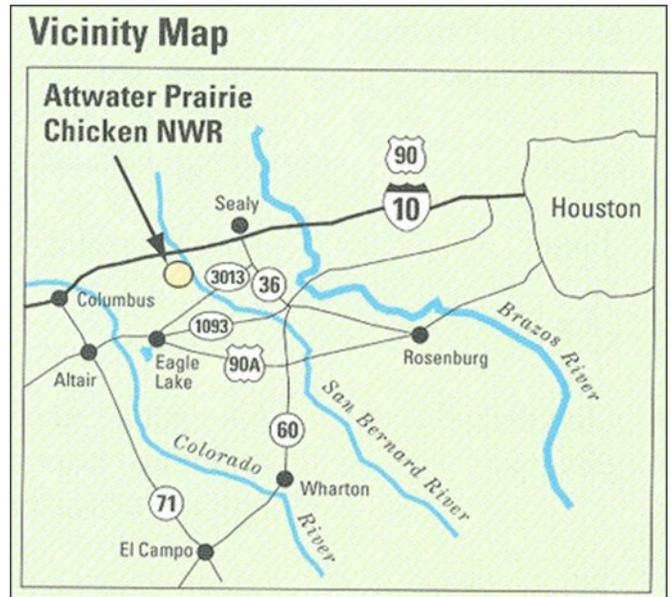
LTVBC Field Trip
Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge, Eagle Lake
Saturday, March 19, 2022.

Meet at Visitors Center at 7:20 am
Sunrise is at 7:30 CDT

Distance from Liberty; 106 mi
Drive time: 1 hour 49 min.

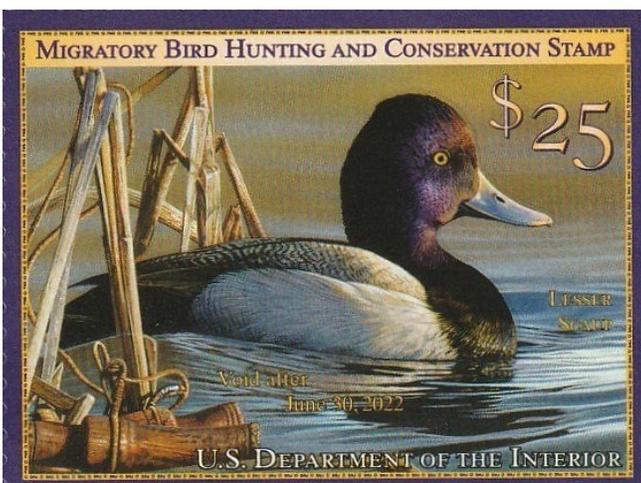
HOURS:

- Refuge trails: Daily, sunrise to sunset
- Visitors Center: Mon-Fri, 7:30 AM - 4 P



Due to Covid restrictions, we are unable to get a tour to the Booming grounds.

<http://deartexas.com/booming-prairie-chickens-at-the-attwater-refuge/>



2021-22 Duck Stamps

Officially called the **Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp**, these stamps help conserve habitat for birds. The bird club is allowed to sell them to you at face value plus a handling fee. We're going to **sell them at face value, which is \$25**. If you want a key chain to display it in, we have those, too. The **blank key chain will be \$2.00**. The stamps and key chains will be available at our field trips and meetings or by contacting Shelli Ellerbe at 936-334-2874. **Cash or check to LTVBC, please.** Learn more about Duck Stamps at:

<https://www.fws.gov/birds/get-involved/duck-stamp/duck-stamp-information-for-birders-and-photographers.php>



LOWER TRINITY VALLEY BIRD CLUB

Membership Information

[Check us out on Facebook!](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/98618981435/>

**It's time to pay 2022 club dues.
Please make checks payable to
LTVBC.**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

E-mail _____

_____ Update my information

_____ New Member _____ Renewing Member

_____ Donation \$ _____

_____ Donation to D. Dauphin Memorial Fund

\$ _____

_____ Student Membership \$10.00

_____ Individual Membership \$20.00

_____ Family Membership \$35.00

_____ Sponsor Membership \$50.00

Dues can be paid online at <https://www.lowertrinityvalleybirdclub.org/>

Or mailed to:

Lower Trinity Valley Bird Club

P.O. Box 6051

Liberty, TX 77575