



# THE WOOD DUCK



Newsletter #232

Lower Trinity Valley Bird Club

February 2018

[www.LowerTrinityValleyBirdClub.org](http://www.LowerTrinityValleyBirdClub.org)

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PO Box 6051 Liberty, Texas 77575

Editor: Shelli Ellerbe

## ***February Meeting Lower Trinity Valley Bird Club***

Thursday, February 8, 2018

6:30 pm

The FLNB Corner

1822 Sam Houston Ave., Liberty

**Directions:** From Highway 90, turn north on Travis St., between Kentucky Fried Chicken and Whataburger, and cross over the railroad tracks. The FLNB Corner is at the intersection of Sam Houston Ave. and Travis St., across from First Liberty National Bank.

Be sure to come early for our “Birder’s Chat” time. If you have any questions, call President Gary Holmes at 281-576-0574, or e-mail him at [geholmes52@gmail.com](mailto:geholmes52@gmail.com) .

### ***Meeting Presentation***

Our speaker for February will David Sarkozi. David’s presentation will be cover his adventures completing a Texas Big Year in 2017 and is titled *Great State of Texas Big Year*. David will also share his plans for the LTVBC June trip to Maine.

A “Big Year” is a personal challenge or an informal competition among birders to see how many species of birds they can identify by sight or sound within a single calendar year and within a specific geographical area. David will share with us the highlights of his 2017 Big Year in which he recorded 45,000 miles of birding and identified 504 species of birds in Texas.

David Sarkozi is an expert birder and is involved in many local and statewide birding and wildlife organizations. He is a volunteer and Friends member with the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge.

David created and manages the internet sites: Birds of the Upper Texas Coast and Texbirds. The listserver, TexBirds, is devoted exclusively to conversations about birds and birding in Texas. The listserv can distribute rare bird alerts and updates almost instantly throughout Texas.

We had more than one  
report on our January field  
trip, see them on pages 3-5.

Apologies for the late publication of this newsletter.  
Processing was interrupted by a Snowy Owl.

-Editor

## Meeting Minutes January 11, 2018



The Lower Trinity Valley Bird Club met Thursday, January 11, 2018, at the First Liberty National Bank Center in Liberty, Texas. President Gary Holmes called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. Seventeen members were present at this month's meeting. Stuart Marcus made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 14, 2017, meeting as published in the January *Wood Duck* #231. Shelli Ellerbe seconded, all agreed, and the motion was approved.

### Treasurer's Report:

- Current checking account balance is \$1,826.74. We incurred expenses in the amount of \$201.75 for the new website. We received \$200.00 for dues. Balance in the David Dauphin Memorial account is \$1,020.30 which includes \$0.12 in interest. Paul Micallef made a motion to accept the treasurer's report as submitted. Lisa Holmes seconded, all agreed, and the motion was accepted.

### Old Business:

- Our four-day weekend trip will be to Brownsville, Texas, from February 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Gary will send out more information via e-mail.
- The Maine trip will be in June 2018. David Sarkozi will be at the February meeting to discuss the agenda. Anyone interested in going should contact Gary Holmes.

### New Business:

- We were unable to get a guide for the Katy Prairie field trip on January 27<sup>th</sup>. Instead, we will go to the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. The Katy Prairie field trip will be on Saturday, February 17.

### Speaker Presentation:

- Shelli Ellerbe gave an in-depth presentation on the use of the online birding resource eBird.

Since there was no more old or new business to discuss, Ceal Stirling made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Paul Micallef seconded, all agreed and the meeting was adjourned.

Renie O'Connor, Secretary

### 2016-2018 LTVBC Officers

**President:** Gary Holmes  
**Vice-president:** David Knutson  
**Secretary:** Renie O'Connor  
**Treasurer:** Shelli Ellerbe  
**Newsletter Editor:** Shelli Ellerbe  
**Programs:** Stuart Marcus & Lisa Holmes

Lower Trinity Valley Bird Club



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## President's Report

By Gary Holmes

Hello Bird Club:

My, the weather has been challenging this winter! I hope you survived the ice and cold.

As expected, we had bad weather for all our scheduled events in January- but we still had good attendance and all the events were beneficial and enjoyable to the participants. At our January meeting, **Shelli Ellerbe** gave a great program over ebird and the rules for determining band codes for birds. Do you know these birds- GBHE, BNST, STKI, RHWO? (answers on page 9) Our January Trip was on a stormy day but it turned out well for

Maine Trip Reservation (limited to 10 participants)	
1	Gary H
2	Lisa H
3	Shelli E
4	Margo T
5	Barbara T
6	Stuart M
7	Denise B
8	
9	
10	
stand-by	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

all who went- see **Joe Hall's and Barbara Tilton's stories** in this newsletter.

We have wonderful plans for February! **David Sarkozi's** presentation will be over his *Great State of Texas Big Year*. David will also share his plans for the **LTVBC June trip to Maine**. We still have three spots open for the Maine trip.

Because so many missed the Anahuac field trip in January due to the bad weather, we will **go the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge again on Feb. 17**. Perhaps we will get another look at the Black Rail. Also, we hope to visit the **Turtle Bayou Nature Preserve**.

**We also have a stay-at-home activity - the Great Backyard Bird Count on February 16-19, 2018. The February Weekend trip to Brownsville has been cancelled.**

Hope you participate and one or all of our February activities.....

*Gary*

### Anahuac Field Trip January 27, 2018 By Barbara Tilton

The alarm goes off at 5 a.m. on a cold wet rainy Saturday morning, what do you do? Get up and go on a Bird Club field trip to look at birds, what else? Seven members of the Lower Trinity Bird Club (Gary, Joe, Marvin, Renie, Ceal, Mary & Barbara) met at White Park for this adventure. Had you asked any of us, we would probably agree that had any one of the others suggested calling the trip off and going back home, we all would have said yes. None of us wanted to be the one to cry "Uncle", so we struck out for Anahuac NWR and Shoveler Pond, hoping the rain would let up.

Heading out from the Visitor Center, we started "ticking" off species...ducks, herons & egrets. Greater White-fronted & Snow Geese were moving. We didn't make it down the first side of Shoveler Pond before realizing the Common Gallinules had a very successful breeding season. They were everywhere...in the ditches, on

both sides of the road, in the middle of the road, back and forth across the road.

This field trip was planned for looking at ducks. We had 13 species. Black-bellied, Gadwall, American Widgeon, Mallard, Mottled, Blue-winged & Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Ring-necked, Lesser Scaup, Red-breasted Merganser and Ruddy Ducks.

Back at the entrance, in a tree close to the top, was a very light hawk. After some study, we realized it was a Krider's Hawk which is the light phase of the Red-tailed Hawk. The funny part, of this observation, was that we were looking at the back of the hawk and all agreed it looked like an owl.

We headed toward Frozen Point to look for the reported White-tailed Hawk. Of course, the trip down this road takes a while. After all, you have to check out everything you see including all those Common Gallinules and Savannah Sparrows. We heard Rails along the way in several different places. I was in the back seat, with the window down, just watching along the edges of the cane. Suddenly I saw the this small, black, fuzzy looking chick like bird, just as it moved back in the canes. STOP...Black Rail I yelled. Renie, who is an excellent birding driver because she can stop on a dime, U-turn and back up anywhere, backed up to where it had gone in. The rail came back barely out of the edge of the cane and quickly ran back in. This time Mary and Ceal were able to see it, too. The looks were very brief, but the bird was unmistakable. It was a Life Bird for all three of us. Meanwhile, Joe, Marvin and Gary were a little way behind us looking at American Pipits. Then they called on the Walkie Talkies to tell us they had a rail too. A King Rail was in the road walking back and forth and off in the grass. We all got very good looks.

We reached the bay and were disappointed; there wasn't much of interest on the water. We got to the area where the Burrowing Owl was last year, but, it is not there this year. BUT, we did see a Wilson's Snipe under the gate. Then we saw a few more fly in. Then we looked by the parking area and there was LOTS of Wilson's Snipe in the grass. They didn't seem to mind us much and we really got to enjoy watching and studying them. We estimated about 25 or more snipes and the most wonderful looks we had ever had. We also picked up Marsh Wren, Orang-crowned, Yellow-rumped and Common Yellowthroat Warbler here. We'd hoped to find Loons, but found a large tight raft of Red-breasted Mergansers instead. There were between 50 and 75, both males and females. We watched as they were moving along, up and down feeding, following the bait fish. This was fun to watch.

We left the refuge and headed to the Skillern Tract where Yellow-headed Blackbirds had been reported. When we arrived, there was no lack of Blackbirds, unfortunately we didn't find any yellow-headed ones. However, the thousands of Blackbirds were a sight to see. They were moving around and sitting on all the stubble sticking up.

All along the way we saw sparrows. Most were Savannahs, but we also saw Le Conte's, Song, White-throated and White-crowned.

On the way home, we ran by the Double Bayou Park. Here we added Robins, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Blue Birds.

We gathered under the Pavilion and went over our Checklist. We ended the day with 81 species. We were surprised to have seen that many birds, on such a drizzly, cold, rainy day, and to find that we had a lot of fun doing it. We were told Anahuac had received 5 inches of rain, we believe it, there was water everywhere. Hope you can join us on our next field trip!

## Anahuac Field Trip- Jan 27, 2018

By Joe Hall

It was a dark and stormy day when seven doughty LTVBC members ventured onto the roads of Chambers County on January 27 in pursuit of birding fame and glory. The “**Magnificent Seven**” survived unscathed and with some lifers tucked into their belts at the end of the day. The waterproof participants were **Renie O’Connor, Mary Hannigan, Ceal Stirling, Barbara Tilton, Joe Hall, Gary Holmes, and Marvin Masters.**

Stops were made at ANWR and the **Double Bayou Park**. Flooding had closed the **Skillern Tract** trail, but vehicular birding through fogged windows rewarded the group with the sight of close to a bajillion (give or take a few thousand) blackbirds feeding in flooded cut-over rice

fields along the access road. Danger was present under the threatening skies as lightning flashed and hundreds of **Common Gallinule** swarmed the roadways and muddy shoulders of the roads of ANWR in pursuit of drowned insects. The throngs of COGA (four-letter Bird Banding Code nomenclature) threatened to damage car tires with their pointy beaks and long pointy toes as they crossed and re-crossed the road in front of the group’s vehicles. The question was asked why the marsh hen crossed the road and the answer given—to get to the other side so they could turn around and cross again. Other road warriors included an elusive **Black Rail** and a well-fed and brave **King Rail** that royally paraded before the group’s binoculars for a couple of minutes - *Noblesse oblige*.

At Frozen Point, **Wilson’s Snipe** (15) were more seen than heard at the former home of the Burrowing Owl. On East Bay groups of **Red-Breasted Mergansers** (75) and **Cormorants** (20) snapped up a fishy bounty. The participants ended the day cold and wet but with their perseverance in the face of adverse weather well rewarded.

### Black Rail

by Barbara Tilton

The alarm goes off at 5a.m. on a cold, wet, rainy Saturday morning, what do you do? Get up and go on a Bird Club field trip to look at birds, what else?

We birded from 7:00-3:00, mostly in the rain from the car, and ended up with 79 species at Anahuac NWR. The absolute highest of highlights was a **Black Rail**, a Life Bird for the 3 of us who got to see it. For those not familiar with them, they are a small six-inch black bird that really doesn't like to fly much, but instead runs around under the grasses like a rat.

God surely smiled on us as we were in the right place, at the right time and looking in just the right spot. They were brief looks, but the bird was unmistakable. So happy I didn't turn over & go back to sleep this morning like I really wanted to!



Photos of King Rail  
by Marvin Masters

Rank	Name	Species count	Year
1	John Weigel	835	2016
2	Olaf Danielson	829	2016
3	Laura Keene	814	2016
4	Yve Morrell	813 (+4)	2017
4	Ruben Stoll	813 (+3)	2017
4	Victor Stoll	813 (+3)	2017
7	Christian Hagenlocher	752	2016
8	Neil Hayward	749	2013
9	Sandy Komito	748	1998
10	Gaylee Dean	745 (+2)	2017
11	John Vanderpoel	743	2011
12	Richard Dean	743 (+2)	2017
13	Jay Lehman	734	2013
14	Robert Ake	731	2010
15	Lynn Barber	723	2008

## North American Big Years

A **big year** is a personal challenge or an informal competition among [birders](#) to see how many species of birds they can identify by sight or sound within a single calendar year and within a specific geographical area. Popularized in North America, big years are commonly done within single US states and Canadian provinces, as well as within larger areas such as the entire world, the lower 48 continental U.S. states, or within the official [American Birding Association](#) Area.

The ABA big year record of 835 species was set by John Weigel of Australia in 2016.

## World Big Years

In 2008, British couple Alan Davies and Ruth Miller traveled around the world, seeing 4341 species. In 2015, Oregon birder [Noah Strycker](#) launched a worldwide big year with the goal of seeing at least 5,000 species—roughly half of the world's species—as he traveled around the globe. On September 16, in India, he broke the existing record of 4,341 species, set in 2008 by Alan Davies and Ruth Miller, when he saw a Sri Lanka frogmouth for his 4,342nd species of the year. He finished the year with 6,042 bird species, his last species seen being an Oriental Bay Owl in Assam, India.<sup>[20]</sup> Strycker's record faced an immediate challenge in 2016 when Dutch birder Arjan Dwarshuis launched an effort to break it as well as raise money for the Birdlife Preventing Extinctions Programme.<sup>[21]</sup> On November 4, 2016,

Dwarshuis saw a [tody motmot](#) in [Panama](#), breaking Strycker's previous record total. He finished the year with 6833 seen bird species and this is the new World big year record.

Because Dwarshuis primarily used the IOC Checklist and Strycker the Clements Checklist, their totals are not fully compatible, as the IOC checklist lists a greater number of species. However, Dwarshuis and Strycker have both compiled checklists for each list.

Many world big year birders aim to minimize costs through a sponsorship, and their carbon footprint through a [carbon offset](#) program.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big\\_year](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_year)

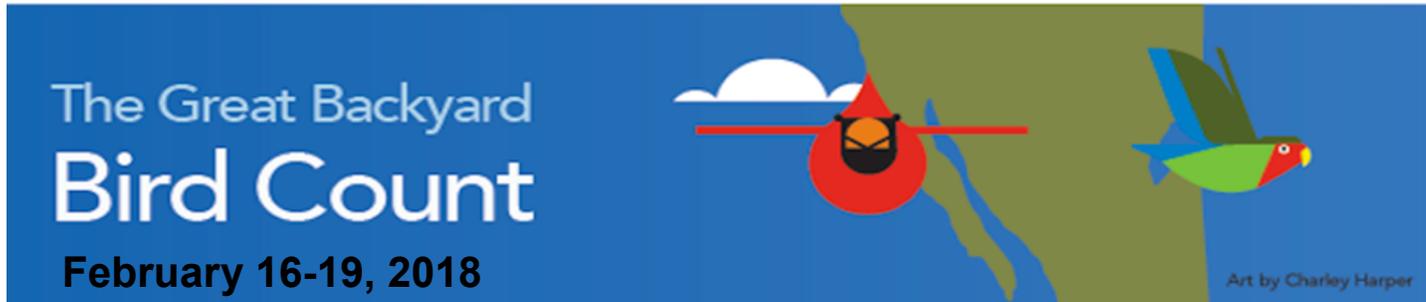
## Coming Up....

<b>2017-2018 Meeting/Speakers Schedule</b>		
<b>Day/Date</b>	<b>Speakers - Topic</b>	<b>Events</b>
Thursday, February 8, 2018	David Sarkozi A Great State of Texas Big Year	Great Backyard Bird Count
Thursday, March 8, 2018	Paul Gregg Guadalupe Mountains NP	
No Thursday meeting in April	"LTVBC Big Day"	
No Thursday meeting in May	Picnic	
All meetings on Thursdays Night at 6:30		

The 2018 LTVBC Adventure in June (6-8 days) will be to **Maine**.  
The trip will be limited to 10 participants- reserve your spot now!

<b>2017-2018 Field Trip Schedule</b>	
<b>Day/Date</b>	<b>Location</b>
Saturday, February 17, 2018	Anahuac NWR, Turtle Bayou Preserve
Saturday, March 17, 2018	Peveto Woods, Cameron, LA
Saturday, April 14, 2018	High Island, Bolivar, Anahuac
Saturday, April 21, 2018	Spring Outdoor Celebration in Mont Belvieu (12-5pm)

Your "Bird Tales" belong here.  
Share your adventures!  
shellerbe@gmail.com  
[geholmes52@gmail.com](mailto:geholmes52@gmail.com)



Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the Great Backyard Bird Count was the first online citizen-science project to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real-time.

Now, more than 160,000 people of all ages and walks of life worldwide join the four-day count each February to create an annual snapshot of the distribution and abundance of birds.

We invite you to participate! For at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count, **February 16-19, 2018**, simply tally the numbers and kinds of birds you see. You can count from any location, anywhere in the world, for as long as you wish!

If you're new to the count, or have not participated since before the 2013 merger with eBird, you must [create a free online account](#) to enter your checklists. If you already have an account, just use the same login name and password. If you have already participated in another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you can use your existing login information, too.

[Click here for more info on how to get started.](#)

1. [Register for the count](#) or use your existing login name and password. If you have never participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count or any other Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you'll need to [create a new account](#). If you already created an account for last year's GBBC, or if you're already registered with eBird or another Cornell Lab citizen-science project, you can use your existing login information.
2. **Count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the GBBC.** You can count for longer than that if you wish! Count birds in as many places and on as many days as you like—one day, two days, or all four days. Submit a separate checklist for each new day, for each new location, or for the same location if you counted at a different time of day. Estimate the number of individuals of each species you saw during your count period.
3. **Enter your results on the GBBC website by clicking "[Submit Observations](#)" on the home page.** Or download the free [eBird Mobile app](#) to enter data on a mobile device. If you already participate in the eBird citizen-science project, please use eBird to submit your sightings during the GBBC. Your checklists will count toward the GBBC.

**LTVBC February Field Trip**  
***Saturday, February 17, 2018***

**Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge** <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/texas/anahuac/information.html>

*Bring spotting scopes, mosquito repellent, water, and lunch. This trip will involve walking trails*

**Directions from Houston to Anahuac NWR:** Take I 10 East to Exit #812 (TX 61 or Anahuac/Hankamer exit). Head south on TX 61 for approximately four miles to stop sign. Continue straight through stop sign, the road becomes Hwy 562. Continue on Hwy 562 for approximately eight and a half miles to the fork in the road. At the fork turn left onto FM 1985 and continue straight for an additional four miles to the main refuge entrance.

**Carpool:** Meet at 6:45AM at White Park

**Travel time:** 30 min from White Park

Morning – bird Anahuac NWR

Early Lunch at 11:00

Afternoon- Turtle Bayou Nature Preserve

**Turtle Bayou Nature Preserve** is comprised of 514 acres of protected wetland, prairie and forested habitats along Turtle Bayou and Lake Anahuac in Chambers County. The Preserve is owned by the Chambers-Liberty Counties Navigation District for the purposes of preserving coastal habitat and protecting water quality. Galveston Bay Foundation holds a [conservation easement](#) on the property to permanently protect the land.

<http://www.galvbay.org/uncategorized/turtle-bayou-nature-preserve/>

RHWO - Red-headed woodpecker  
STKI - Swallow-tailed kite  
BNST - Black-necked stilt  
GBHE - Great blue heron



# LOWER TRINITY VALLEY BIRD CLUB

## Membership Information

[Check us out on Facebook!](#)

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

Would you like to get your newsletter by email?

Let us know at:

[geholmes52@gmail.com](mailto:geholmes52@gmail.com)

You'll get full color pictures and live links.

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E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ New Member \_\_\_ Renewing Member

\_\_\_ Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Donation to D. Dauphin Memorial Fund  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Update my information

Send newsletter by \_\_\_ email or \_\_\_ mail

**It's time to pay dues for 2017-18.**  
**Please make checks payable to LTVBC.**

___ Student Membership	\$10.00
___ Individual Membership	\$20.00
___ Family Membership	\$35.00
___ Sponsor Membership	\$50.00

Lower Trinity Valley Bird Club  
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