



The Wood Duck



Newsletter #172

March 2011

Lower Trinity Valley Bird Club ~ P.O. Box 6051 ~ Liberty, Texas 77575 ~ www.ltvbc.org

The March meeting of the LOWER TRINITY VALLEY BIRD CLUB will be held on Saturday, March 12, 2011 at 10:00 a.m. in the meeting room of the First Liberty National Bank located at 1900 Sam Houston in Liberty. From Hwy. 90 turn on Travis Street, between Kentucky Fried Chicken and Whataburger, cross over the railroad tracks and take a right into the bank parking lot. Be sure to come early at 9:30 a.m. for our "Birder's Chat" time. If you have any questions call President Gary Holmes at 281-576-0574 or e-mail him at lisashepholmes@verizon.net.

Our speaker for March will be Gary Holmes, LTVBC president; the presentation will be over *The Proposed Trinity River Birding Trail*.

Currently, Liberty County is a part of the Trinity Loop of the Upper Texas Coastal Birding Trail (UTC); however, the information is in desperate need of updating and there is no mention of our spectacular Swallow-tailed Kites. The current

birding trail information does little to encourage birding and visitors to our area.

The Lower Trinity River Valley area offers exceptional birding opportunities. We have three well developed birding areas in the South Liberty and Northern Chambers counties -Champion Lake, Cedar Hill Park, and JJ Mayes Wildlife Trace. Also, the river valley between Liberty and Dayton is the prime destination for Swallow-tailed Kite observation in the summer. The presentation will highlight our current birding opportunities and focus on the needed birding enhancements in the Liberty- Dayton Area.

Gary Holmes has been a birder since taking an Ornithology course in college in the 70's. He and his wife, Lisa, live on beautiful Champion Lake and enjoy the cypress trees and the wildlife. Gary is a professional educator with 30 years experience in the La Porte School and has been an Adjunct professor at UHCL for 15 years.

Minutes of the February Meeting



February 12, 2011--Call to order at 10:05 AM. Welcome to visitors. We had 15 visitors. Motion was made by Stuart Marcus to approve the minutes and Ellen Pickett seconded. All approved. Treasurer's report was made and there is \$2,008.47 in the bank. Ellen Pickett moved to accept the Treasurer's report and Paul Newton seconded. All Approved.

Old Business:

1. Liberty Library Feeders- no birds yet, just squirrels.
2. Out of State Field trip to Oregon - Any interest-no discussion.
3. Magee Marsh – Celeste Newton has 4 going.
4. Birding Trail – Ellen Pickett had a map of Liberty County. Shelli Ellerbe made up flyer for the Chamber of Commerce.

5. Ellen Pickett reported that they had a 3 person meeting to discuss viewing of Swallow-tailed Kites. Denise Barkis reported that the bus driver said it was Okay and she could pick up a group in Dayton & drop off at a designated site and then pick up a little later.

6. Proposed Trinity River Birding Loop - Starting at the Trinity River Bridge on I-10! Wildlife Refuge going to have trails in the city!

New Business:

1. Great Backyard Bird Count- Feb. 18-21. Texas has the highest in the country!
2. Last field trip to Pleasure Island/McFaddin NWR - Lots of birds and people!
3. Next field trip to Sheldon Lake - meet at Dayton Brookshires store.
4. Looked at pictures that David K. took of a Red-winged Black Bird with white collar naped neck.
5. Back yard Bird Quiz.

6. Report for the people that went to Concan and ate at the restaurant. Credit Card machine was broke and they just recently charged everyone's card.

Program was given by Diana Foss about Purple Martins. Everyone learned and enjoyed the program.

Motion to adjourn made by Odell Casey and Stuart Marcus seconded. Motion passed.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lisa Holmes



February Field Trip Report

By Shelli Ellerbe

We had a great field trip to Sheldon Lake SP! There were eight participants. Twice the group happened upon friends of the bird club (Recci Debert and Don & Nancy Fisher). A total of seventy-six species were seen, including a very early for the area **Baltimore Oriole**. Many of the birds for the day were seen while walking the trails around the old fishery ponds in the park. Sparrows and meadowlarks were abundant in the prairie area. Waterfowl covered Sheldon Lake, but most of them were Coots. After a tip to drive in the area north of the park, along the San Jacinto River, we found the Bald eagle nest we were directed to and saw a pair of Bald eagles. (continued on page 7)

President's Message

By Gary Holmes

March 2011

March 12 meeting

My presentation will be over *The Proposed Trinity River Birding Trail*. We need to invite our local Chamber of Commerce and city officials to the March meeting to get their support for the birding trail and kite viewing site. Also, we will review woodpeckers in preparation for our field trip.

Feb 12 Meeting

We had a great meeting on Feb 12 with 38 people in attendance including 15 guests. Diana Foss gave a nice presentation over Martins and we had several highly successful Martin managers at the meeting who shared their expertise. Joseph Saputo has invited the club see his Martins this spring. We are planning to have two field trips to Joseph's house in Old River to allow him to show us his Martin houses and how he takes care of the birds. I will send dates at a later time

Sheldon Lake Field Trip- Feb 19, 2011

The Sheldon Lake State Park trip was a success- we identified 76 species and found a Bald Eagle's nest.

Change in the March Field trip

I have been informed by the local officials in Newton County that the Wild Azalea Canyon Area has not been maintained for the past three years and the roads and trails are in disrepair – they do not recommend visitors. Therefore, the March Fieldtrip will be to **Jones State Forest**, near Conroe. We will try to find all six local woodpeckers: Red-headed, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy, Red-cockaded, and Pileated Woodpeckers. Jones State Forest is one of the best places in Texas to view the endangered **Red-cockaded Woodpecker**.

Hope to see you on March 12thGary

Bird Tales

And related news



Gary & Lisa Holmes- We saw a **Buff-bellied Hummingbird** at our feeder for several days. David Knutson took several good pictures when it visited his feeder. (David lives on the same street.) Four **Carolina Wrens** entered our house through the open back door- they were very curious and enjoyed exploring our kitchen pantry. **Eastern Blue Birds** are investigating our nest boxes. **Ospreys** were seen with fish in their talons over Champion Lake. We found the **Bald Eagle's nest** on County Line Road.

Barbara Tilton- February 23, 2011 Sue Davison and I made a run to Lake Livingston Dam to look for the Black-legged Kittiwake. The kittiwake had been reported for some time and we had put off going because we didn't think we would ever be able to pick it out from the other gulls and terns there. Finally we decided to give it a shot and we actually found it. It was a juvenile and the black "W" on the upper wings made it pretty easy to pick out. It was a lifer for both of us.

Barbara Tilton- February 26, 2011 Ceal Stirling, Sue Davison and I took a trip to Anahuac NWR after church. We were looking for the Yellow-headed blackbird, Harris's Sparrows and Cinnamon Teals reported. We walked the trail and boardwalk from the VIS to the Willows and back. Ceal spotted the Harris's Sparrow and there was also a White-crowned Sparrow in the flock, but we didn't get very long looks at either. We saw an adult Bald Eagle soaring over the area too. We road around Shoveler Pond and they are doing a lot of work out in the pond. They have mowed or pressed down a lot of the cane out in the middle. It should be easier to see the birds there this spring. We looked at several bunches of ducks but

they were far out and all we could really pick out was Northern Shovelers, Green-winged Teal and Mottled. We saw lots and lots of Northern Harriers down FM 1985 and on the refuge.

Shelli Ellerbe- Margo Taylor and I drove to Hull to see a **Ring-necked duck** on a small pond. We got a wonderful look at the female we found. (Much better looks at her than the few ring-necks we had seen on Sheldon Lake during the field trip the day before.) On the way back to Liberty we happened across a male Ring-necked duck in the ponds across from North Main Baptist out on 146. The view on Saturday was so bad, I had qualms about saying I had seen this "lifer", but no second thoughts about listing it on Sunday. Margo and I both added a bird to the life list!

The 2011 GBBC (March 18 -March 21)

The results of the GBBC are here! The most commonly reported bird in United States/ Canada was the Northern Cardinal, it appeared on 45,481 checklists. The most numerous bird sighted was the European Starling with 1,376,859 individual birds reported. Texas reported 328 different species, the most for any state/province and Corpus Christi reported 193 species, the most for any city. We had a nice number of local checklists.

North American 2011 results:

Total Checklists Submitted: 91,807
 Total Species Observed: 595
 Total Individual Birds Counted: 11,354,230

Local GBBC 2011 results:

Cleveland
 24 species, 4 checklists, 141 birds counted
 Crosby
 18 species, 4 checklists, 234 birds counted
 Dayton
 40 species, 5 checklists, 721 birds counted
 Liberty
 16 species, 1 checklist, 56 birds counted
 Mont Belvieu
 33 species, 4 checklist, 610 birds counted

Aransas NWR Rockport/Fulton Trip

By Barbara Tilton

February 14, 2011 JT and I packed up and headed to the Rockport/Fulton area after an afternoon appointment. Our destination for the night was Port Lavaca. We started our trip list with all the usuals, **Rock Pigeons, Grackles**, etc. Our first real birding stop was the Formosa Tejano Wetland pond between HWY 59 and HWY 35. Renie, Sue and I had visited this pond when we went down for the Broad-billed Hummer back in December. It didn't disappoint, as there were quite a few ducks on the pond. We had the only **Canvasbacks** of the trip here and 2 **Bald Eagles** sitting in the top of a small tree across the pond. We began seeing quite a few **Sandhill Cranes** in the fields and pastures along the way. By this time it was getting dark so we headed on into Port Lavaca for the night.

February 15, 2011 We were up early on our way to Aransas NWR, JT had never been there. We arrived just as the visitor center was opening. We did a little shopping and found a neat Bird Bingo game to play with the grandsons. The lady told us about the **Great Kiskadees** that had been hanging out just outside their window, sure enough one was right there in the tree. We worked our way through the refuge stopping to check out the rafts of ducks along the way. We saw **Northern Pintails, Lesser Scaups, Ruddys, Ring-neckeds, Blue-winged and Green winged Teals**. We walked some of the trails and climbed the Observation Tower where we saw the first **Whooping Cranes** of the trip. We drove the Auto Tour Loop, had our picnic lunch and stopped back by the Visitors Center where we saw 5 **Wild Turkeys**. Then it was on to the Rockport/Fulton area. We saw **Crested Caracaras, Red-tails** and lots of **Kestrels** along the way. On the trip I saw several hawks that might have been White-tailed but never got a good enough look for a positive ID.

Our next stop was Goose Island State Park. First on the list was to look for the **Yellow-faced Grassquit** around sites 216-218. We parked, got out of the truck and before we even got to the picnic table at site 216 the grassquit popped out right in front of us. I told JT that isn't usually how it works, normally you have to work a little harder for a rare bird. I had seen a Grassquit in 2002 in the Valley with Judy, Celeste and Ellen but this little guy was a beauty and let us look as long as we wanted. Next was to look for the adult male **Anna's Hummingbird**. Site 119 was where it had been feeding, so we sat at the picnic table and waited for it to show back up. It took a while, but then it was there and it was gorgeous! This was a lifer for me. We also saw **Buff-bellied and Black-chinned Hummers** here. We rode on down to the Bayfront sites to look for the Long-tailed duck, but we didn't find it. We took a look at the Big Tree, then on down to the water to see the ducks. We saw more **Redheads, American Widgeons** and **Gadwalls**. We had **Black-bellied Whistling Ducks** on the pond across from the Big Tree as well as 3 Whooping Cranes in the pasture by the pond. Calling it a day, we checked into the motel.

February 16, 2011 We headed out for our whooping crane boat tour. We were early for the tour so spent a little time on the beach area where we found some **Marbled Godwits** and a **Reddish Egret**. We went out on the Wharf Cat Tour Boat. Going out of the harbor we saw the first of many **Common Loons**.

There were lots of oyster boats in the bay. We had dressed in layers, so were able to enjoy the top deck of the boat for the entire tour. From the boat we saw lots of **Buffleheads**, some **Mottled Ducks, American Oystercatchers, Black Skimmers, American Avocets, Long-billed Curlews, Forster's, Royal and Caspian Terns, Laughing, Ring-billed and Herring Gulls** and **Ospreys** just to name a few, and of course **Whooping Cranes**. We saw a total of 38 whooping cranes on our trip. We had a late lunch then went back to the State Park to try for a longer look at the Anna's. I set for quite a long time and never got another look at it, but did have a **Cooper's Hawk** make several low passes right over the camp site. Then I moved down to site 112 to watch for the Harris's Sparrow being seen there. I enjoyed watching **Lincoln's Sparrows** but the Harris's didn't show up. We watched several flocks of **Field Sparrows** on our way out of the park. We took a ride back down to look at the ducks and cranes by the Big Tree area again, then on in for the night.

February 17, 2011 We packed back up to head for home. We made one more stop by the State Park to try for the Harris's Sparrow. I sit at the site and watched the feeders for a while adding **Black-crested Titmouses** and **Chipping Sparrows** to our list. Finally the call came that the bird walk group had a large sparrow in the top of a tree just across the road and there it was, the **Harris's Sparrow!** We were good to go then with one more trip down to the bay front to look for the Long-tailed duck, but no luck there. We were on our way home now with just a few more roadside stops along the way. We saw several flocks of **Snow Geese** with a few **White Fronted Geese** mixed in. Our final birding stop was at the educational area of the Formosa Tejano Wetland Project. Renie, Sue & I had seen a Vermilion Flycatcher here in December but we didn't find it this time. We did get a close up look at a really pretty male Bufflehead in the ditch right next to the viewing tower.

We had a fun trip and ended up with 105 species on our trip list. I wished, by the time the trip was over, that I had counted the **Great Blue Herons**. We can rest assured, they are alive and well. I can't even guess how many we saw, but it was a ton of them.

Field Trip- March 19, 2011

W G Jones State Forest, Magnolia, TX

Bring Binoculars and lunch. This trip will involve walking trails

Carpool: Meet at the Dayton Brookshire's parking lot at 7am

From Dayton:

TX-321 N to Cleveland -26.5 mi,
Turn left at S Washington Ave -0.5 mi,
Turn right at TX-105 to Conroe -19.0 mi,
Turn left at TX-336 Loop -5.6 mi,
Turn left at I-45 Frontage S - 2.9 mi,
Slight right toward Farm-To-Market 1488 W -0.2 mi,
Continue straight onto Farm-To-Market 1488 W -1.9 mi

Travel time: 1 hour 17 mins / 57.0 mi

This 1,725-acre state forest was named for W. Goodrich Jones, the "Father of Forestry" in Texas. Primarily a native loblolly pine forest, it is managed as a "demonstration forest" to test various forest management techniques, forest genetics, and forest product utilization. Prescribed fires are set annually, and the mature pine areas are burned once every three to five years. The self-guided Sweetleaf Nature Trail is located in the northwest corner of the forest; it serves as an ideal classroom for learning about typical flora and fauna of southeast Texas.

Key birds: Wood Duck; Red-headed, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy, **Red-cockaded** and Pileated Woodpeckers; and **Brown-headed Nuthatch** are present year-round. Chuck-will's-widow; Wood Thrush; Wormeating, Swainson's, Kentucky, and Hooded Warblers; Louisiana Waterthrush; and Indigo and Painted Buntings occur in summer. American Woodcock; Sedge Wren; and Henslow's, LeConte's, Fox, and Harris's Sparrows can usually be found in winter.



Red-cockaded Woodpecker

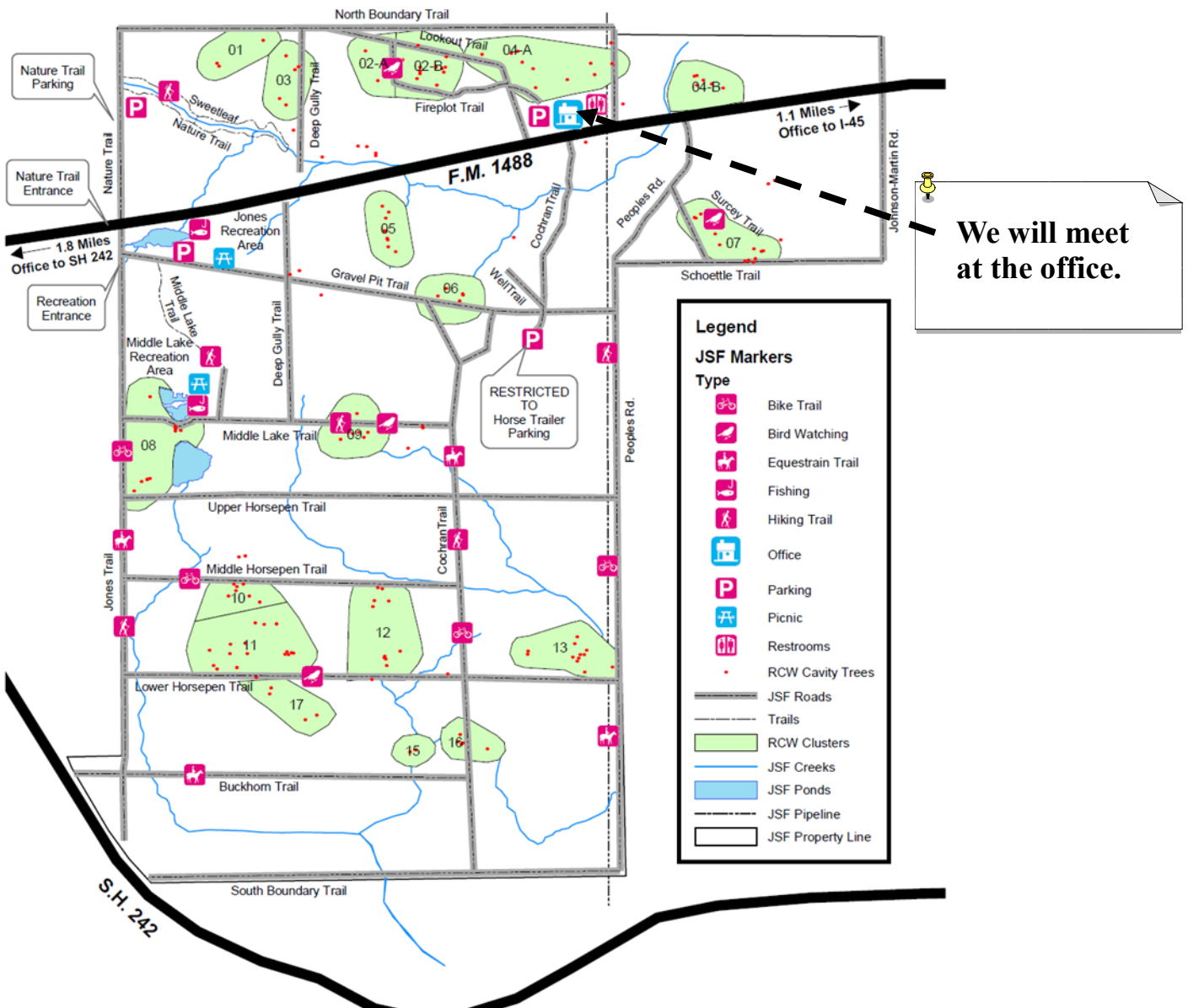
By David Sarkozi

An endangered species the Red-cockaded Woodpecker is a specialist. It is the only North American Woodpecker that nests in live mature pine trees. They also form small colonies and have several nests. Around the nests the woodpeckers keep the sap flowing to prevent predators from entering the nest hole. The large streaks of sap on the tree make the nests easy to spot. The birds won't be far away.

Small, but larger than a Downy Woodpecker; the Red-cockaded is not hard to identify. The large white checkered patch stands out as the best field mark. Vocal and active, the birds are easy to locate. The red "cockades" on the head are rarely visible.

Here are directions to my "sure things" spot for them. Follow the directions to [Jones State Forest](#). Go west on FM 1488 about one mile to the second road on the left. This is the first paved road on the left. Right after you turn onto this road, turn left onto the first dirt road. Just before you get to the T intersection on this road, park and walk to the T. Turn left and go about 200 yards to the nest trees (they are marked with green rings of paint) on the west side of the road. The woodpeckers will be along in a minute. At this spot I've had 6 species of woodpecker in my field of view. (excerpted from *Birds of the Texas Coast*, 1996)

W. Goodrich Jones State Forest



For more information on the woodpeckers of east Texas go to:
http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/huntwild/wild/birding/woodpeckers_pineywoods/



Coming up.....
 Mark your calendar

Spring 2011 Field Trips	
Saturday March 19	Jones State Forest near Conroe, TX
Saturday April 16	High Island, TX

Speakers for 2011 Meetings	
Date	Speaker & Topic
Saturday, March 12	Gary Holmes <i>Trinity Birding Loop</i>
Saturday, April 9	Meeting at High Island
Saturday, May 14	Winnie Burkett

From Houston Audubon's Naturalist High Island Spring 2011

By Winnie Burkett, Sanctuary Manager

Spring is here, and it is time for the High Island Spring Birding Season. Volunteers will staff the Boy Scout Woods kiosk March 24-May 7. Our friends from Tropical Birding will be back with the wonderful bird walks that are so popular.

This year's **bird walk schedule** is a little different. The first walk of the day will meet at 9 a.m. at the kiosk in Boy Scout Woods. The noon shorebird walk will also meet at the Boy Scout Woods kiosk with the destination being determined by where the most shorebirds are being seen. There will only be one afternoon walk. It will begin at 4 p.m. in the Smith Oaks Old Mexico Road parking lot.

Eagle Optics will be visiting High Island April 22-24. This is a great opportunity to try out telescopes and binoculars. If you decide to buy some new optics, a portion of your purchase price will go to Houston Audubon.

Plant Sale

If you want to attract more hummingbirds and butterflies to your yard, plan to visit the annual High Island Plant Sale at Boy Scout Woods. The sale will start April 1 and last until the plants are gone. The plants on sale are selected because they are beneficial to butterflies and hummingbirds.

Barbecue Lunches

The Methodist Church will again be selling those wonderful barbecue lunches at the church every Saturday in April from 11 a.m. until the food is gone.

Rookery Platform Changes

In order to give all sanctuary visitors a chance to get good looks at the birds in the rookery, we will no longer allow tripod photography on the covered observation platforms. A new tripod photography area is being developed on the levee. Photographers are reminded that tripods are not allowed on trails and boardwalks at our High Island sanctuaries. Photographers, in their enthusiasm to get photos, sometimes seem to forget others need to be able to use the trails.

More info at: <http://www.houstonaudubon.org>

(from page 2) As you can tell from the list many species can be seen in and around the park. It's a short drive and the walking trails are well maintained in most areas of the park. In a few weeks there will be great views of rookeries of nesting herons and egrets. If you haven't been to this park, you've missed a great place to do some local bird-watching.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Black-bellied Whistling-Duck | 39 Red-bellied Woodpecker |
| 2 Snow Goose | 40 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker |
| 3 Wood Duck | 41 Downy Woodpecker |
| 4 American Wigeon | 42 Eastern Phoebe |
| 5 Mallard | 43 Blue Jay |
| 6 Northern Shoveler | 44 American Crow |
| 7 Northern Pintail | 45 Tree Swallow |
| 8 Green-winged Teal | 46 Carolina Chickadee |
| 9 Ring-necked Duck | 47 Tufted Titmouse |
| 10 Pied-billed Grebe | 48 Carolina Wren |
| 11 American White Pelican | 49 House Wren |
| 12 Brown Pelican | 50 Golden-crowned Kinglet |
| 13 Neotropic Cormorant | 51 Ruby-crowned Kinglet |
| 14 Double-crested Cormorant | 52 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher |
| 15 Anhinga | 53 Eastern Bluebird |
| 16 Great Blue Heron | 54 Hermit Thrush |
| 17 Great Egret | 55 American Robin |
| 18 Snowy Egret | 56 Gray Catbird |
| 19 Little Blue Heron | 57 Northern Mockingbird |
| 20 Tricolored Heron | 58 Brown Thrasher |
| 21 Yellow-crowned Night-Heron | 59 European Starling (I) |
| 22 White Ibis | 60 Cedar Waxwing |
| 23 Black Vulture | 61 Orange-crowned Warbler |
| 24 Turkey Vulture | 62 Yellow-rumped Warbler |
| 25 Bald Eagle | 63 Pine Warbler |
| 26 Northern Harrier | 64 Common Yellowthroat |
| 27 Red-shouldered Hawk | 65 Savannah Sparrow |
| 28 Red-tailed Hawk | 66 Le Conte's Sparrow |
| 29 American Kestrel | 67 Lincoln's Sparrow |
| 30 Common Moorhen | 68 Swamp Sparrow |
| 31 American Coot | 69 White-throated Sparrow |
| 32 Laughing Gull | 70 Northern Cardinal |
| 33 Ring-billed Gull | 71 Red-winged Blackbird |
| 34 Herring Gull | 72 Eastern Meadowlark |
| 35 Forster's Tern | 73 Common Grackle |
| 36 Rock Pigeon (I) | 74 Great-tailed Grackle |
| 37 Mourning Dove | 75 Baltimore Oriole |
| 38 Belted Kingfisher | 76 American Goldfinch |



LOWER TRINITY VALLEY BIRD CLUB MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____ Date _____

Dues should be paid by May of each year. Please make checks payable to LTVBC.

Student Membership --- \$10.00

Individual Membership --- \$20.00

Family Membership --- \$35.00

Sponsor Membership --- \$50.00

Lifetime Membership --- \$200.00

Donation --- \$ _____

New Member Renewing Member

Update my information

Lower Trinity Valley Bird Club
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