

# TEXAS, Upper coast

## 9th - 19th April 2008

### Overview

Due to a change of plan for a birding trip in early 2008 I had the opportunity to visit the upper Texas coast for 10 days in mid April. Because I had only a limited amount of time I decided not to spend it travelling south to the Rio Grande Valley which would have taken a few days, especially as I had done that a few years ago during a winter visit, and concentrate my efforts on the High Island area. Judging when to visit is a lottery. I could be too early or too late and miss a fallout and a number of good species. I chose these dates in order to try and get a good spread of species but was probably a little too early for the bulk of the migration. That said there would still be good birds to see.

I spent a little time on the Internet trying to find the best deals on flights and car hires and ended up booking a flight and car hire through Trailfinders [www.trailfinders.com](http://www.trailfinders.com), a travel firm I have often used. I also searched for motels near High Island and ended up booking a room at the Motel 6 (insert website address here) at Winnie for the duration. Winnie is the closest town to High Island in which you can currently stay.

I also researched a number of trip reports from several sources and made a rough plan as to what I would do day to day though obviously open to change if there was a fallout.

### Costs:

- Flight and Car rental: £589.10
- Motel 6m Winnie: \$49.49 per night plus tax = £276.04 for a queen sized bed for 10 nights

### Resources used:

#### • **Site Guide**

**A birders Guide to the Texas Coast by Cooksey & Weeks:** An excellent location and birding site guide which suggested many small areas to visit that I had not found on the web or via trip reports. There are details of access with some maps and which species that are likely to be encountered and at which time of year. Indispensable.

#### • **Websites**

[www.travelingbirder.com](http://www.travelingbirder.com) is an excellent source of worldwide trip reports and several here we used as basis to visiting the coast.

For details of trails at **Big Thicket** visit [www.nps.gov/archive/bith/trails.htm](http://www.nps.gov/archive/bith/trails.htm)

For details of trails at **Martin Dies Jr. State Park** visit

[http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/martin\\_dies\\_jr/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/martin_dies_jr/)

For downloadable **PDF** maps to the state park visit:

[http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/martin\\_dies\\_jr/media/pdf/mdjrloc.pdf](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/martin_dies_jr/media/pdf/mdjrloc.pdf)

[http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/pwdpubs/media/park\\_maps/pwd\\_mp\\_p4504\\_031c.pdf](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/pwdpubs/media/park_maps/pwd_mp_p4504_031c.pdf)

**Sea Rim State Park** and PDF Maps visit

[http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/sea\\_rim/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/sea_rim/)

For maps and information on the **upper gulf coast state parks** and birding areas visit

[http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/gulf\\_coast/](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/gulf_coast/)

**7 Day forecast** visit

<http://forecast.weather.gov/MapClick.php?CityName=Galveston&state=TX&site=HGX&textField1=29.3&textField2=-94.795&e=0> for 7 day forecast

For visiting **Attwater Prairie Chicken reserve** visit

<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/texas/attwater/index.html>

Birding on **Galveston Island** visit <http://www.tamug.tamu.edu/elder/birding.htm>

Birds of the **Upper Texas Coast** <http://www.texasbirding.net/>

World Birding Centre - Texas <http://www.worldbirdingcenter.org>

PDF maps of **JJ Mayes** area <http://www.swg.usace.army.mil/pao/newsrel/JJMayes/JJMayesMap.pdf>

**Texas Hotspots**; plenty of information but much of it out of date  
<http://www.camacdonald.com/birding/ustexas.htm>

#### • **Field Guides**

##### **Field Guide to the Birds of Eastern North America - The North American Bird Guide; Sibley**

A cut down edition, covering just those species found in the Eastern half of North America, from the full sized version, which covers the whole of North America. A guide light on text but with excellent and accurate illustrations that made the job of identification a whole lot easier. An excellent guide and the one taken on the trip.

##### **A field Guide to the Birds of North America, Third Edition; National Geographic**

A decent enough guide that combines illustrations from the older versions with all new illustrations. It is often easy to tell which ones are which; the newer ones are more technically accurate. The guide covers the whole of North America but with clear maps and text which means that it is more than adequate for task of identifying the birds that appear in front of you, sparrow though could be a little more tricky with this guide.

##### **New World Warblers; Helm**

A superb monograph to all of the warblers found in the New World, both North, Central and South America. Used as a reference this information and superb illustrations contained in this book aided in the identification of the American Wood Warblers

**The Shorebird Guide; Houghton Mifflin:** A stunning photographic identification guide that surpasses all that has gone before it in terms of information, quality and pleasure to look through. The photographs are stunning and with concise text detailing the relevant identification points. Thoroughly recommended for sorting out the waders/shorebirds.

**Waders of Europe, Asia and North America; Helm:** At first glance this lightweight book seems a little underwhelming but on further investigation the illustrations are very accurate, clearly laid out and with brief but accurate identification text. Standing birds are grouped together in the first half of the book whilst flying birds are at the rear along with range maps, though these are obviously on a wider, worldwide stage rather on a North American standpoint. Another highly recommended wader reference.

**Gulls of the Americas; Houghton Mifflin:** Another quality photographic ID guide. Used as a reference only as those species likely to be encountered in Texas are not as difficult to identify as those found on the US west coast.

**Buntings and Sparrows, A guide to the Buntings and North American Sparrows; Pica Press:** An essential reference this monograph does a sterling job in sorting out the LBJ's

#### **Other titles:**

**Thrushes; Helm:** For help in identifying the Catharus thrushes

**Shorebirds; Helm:** used now secondly to the Shorebird Guide

**New World Blackbirds; Helm:** For superb reference on grackles, cowbirds, meadowlarks and Orioles

**Finches and Sparrows; Helm:** to assist in getting to grips with the sparrows

#### **Accommodations:**

- Motel 6: 134 Spur 5, Winnie, Texas, US 77665 Tel: 001 4092963611: A standard motel with standard rooms with a two ring electric hob, a Microwave, fridge/freezer and TV. Ideally situated for go down to High Island of Sabine Woods.

#### **Travel**

- **International Flights:** With British Airways were straight forward enough with no stop overs though the flight is 10 hours and the in flight entertainment system is poor.

Baggage Allowance for Economy was 23kg for checked luggage whilst there was no restriction on weight for carry on hand luggage as long as it fit in the specific diameters (56cmx45cmx25cm). Visit [www.BritishAirways.com](http://www.BritishAirways.com) for latest flight and luggage information

- **Driving/Roads:** Driving in Texas is very easy though I found some of the road signs a little to small and often last minute so some back tracking had to be made at the right junctions. Once you know the routes though there shouldn't be a problem.
- **Red Tape:** No Visa is required for entry into Texas but you 'must' have your first night pre-booked in the US before travel, you run the risk of not being allowed on the flight if you do not.

### Food

There are plenty of fast food options in Winnie with the Whataburger being the best of the burgers joints. There is a Cajun Streakhouse close to the motel but I was less than impressed with the food here. Alternatively you can eat in. There is a supermarket south of town on the way to High Island called Market Basket where you can get anything from frozen meals to everything you may want to make you own meals. There's not much available in High Island other than the convenience store but there are a couple of restaurants at Cristal Beach along Bolivar Peninsula.

### Hints and Tips

If you are going to be using the photo blind make sure you book a spot well in advance with the Boy Scout Wood information booth. Photographers book them up quickly, especially if there is a potential fall expected. Also if you can take a small fold away stool it would be beneficial as the windows are low and can be more than a little uncomfortable for the hours you need to spend here. It may even be worth investigating the possibility of mealworms for the photo blind. Not sure if this has been done before but the advent of water and food could bring in a lot more birds than currently. Bait shops nearby may be able to supply the mealworms or something similar.

Migrants will tend to arrive in the afternoon, generally from 3-4pm onwards and will get downed into the woods if met with a weather front.

In places such as Anahuac, The Oilfields, Roll Over Pass and Bolivar Flats the best photographic opportunities are by using the car as a mobile hide; you can often get very close to the birds.

If birding it is good to be at Boy Scout Wood as most birders/birdwatchers gather there and there can be a lot of information available as to what is about but if you want to get away from it visit Smith Oaks or even Hooks Wood, the numbers of people will be far far less. There is another wood that may be worth exploring that will probably have virtually no visitors and that's HAS Eubanks Sanctuary, which is only a short distance from the Rookery road entrance gate to Smith Oaks. I walked around here once and saw no birders and few birds but it was at a time when few migrants were around anyway. Exploring the roads and edges of other areas could result in a lot of birds and no birders.

Allow time between sites, you will need about 35minutes between High Island and Anahuac and allow up to 2hours for High Island and the George Bush International Airport, 1½ hours if outside peak rush hour times.

### The High Island Woods

- **Boy Scout Wood**

The main wood for visiting birders due to its small size; good trails and boardwalks and information booth. There is ample parking nearby. There are three pools though the most popular is the one by the grandstand where some of the now few remaining large trees are situated. A hurricane in 2007 destroyed most of the mature trees in the wood. There is a photo blind overlooking a couple of drips where birds come into bathe during the course of the day, afternoons are generally better than mornings.

- **Smith Oaks Wood**

Only a short drive from Boy Scout, about 5minutes through the small town of High Island, is this larger wooded area with extensive lakes. There are several access points though the best is from the Rookery car park. The trees here were largely untouched by the 2007 hurricane and seemed to attract more warblers than Boy Scout. The egret rookery is a short walk from the car park and is best visited in the late

afternoon when the sun will be behind you allowed perfect photographic opportunities. It generally also gets less birders unless something really good is found.

- **Hooks Wood**

Situated near the end of first avenue, the last turning on the right when heading towards Bolivar Peninsula, this tiny little wood has a boardwalk, a couple of drips and a few smaller trails. There are a couple of nice large oaks that attracted many good warblers and on my last day in Texas it was the hub of activity at High Island.

### Sites near High Island

- **Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge**

An excellent wetland site half hour drive north of High Island. There are several driving tracks where you can use the car as hide to get close to the birdlife and Alligators. There is a boardwalk into the marsh at Shoveler Pond. There are several walking trails close to the visitor centre, notably the Willows and the nearby Salt Cedars where migrants often appear. Anahuac do weekend rail walks into the prairie in pursuit of Yellow Rail and the Holy Grail the Black Rail. Many wading birds use Anahuac and is a regular stop off point for Hudsonian Godwits and other 'shorebirds; flocks of Stilt, Pectoral and Semipalmated Sandpipers as well as summer plumaged Wilson's Phalaropes were present whilst I was here.

- **The Oilfields**

Just after crossing the bridge on the way towards High Island there is a dirt track on the right at the bend in the road. This takes you into the Oilfields. Along this track take the second left; the first is a dead end at a nodding donkey. Along the second track is a multitude of wader filled pools where extremely close views can be obtained. Point blank dowitchers and Least Sandpipers were possible with careful manoeuvring of the car. Walking here is not recommended as the birds can be easily flushed but watching from the car seems to disturb them less. Note that the Oilfields are private and if asked to leave by any of the site workers this should be honoured.

- **Bolivar Peninsula**

There are a number of sites along the peninsula west to the ferry terminal. The best of these are at Roll Over Pass, Yacht Basin Road, Tuna Road, 108 Loop Road that crossing at Horseshoe Lake and the Bolivar Flats accessed from Retillion Road. Birds can be seen in fields all along the peninsula and some where only seen here, Long-billed Curlews were only seen in one field about 2 miles from High Island. Roll Over Pass was a favourite site with the car park to the east (High Island side) and on the bay side being the best. Low tide here will see many gulls, terns and waders out on the exposed flats whilst at High Tide they gather in the car park where stunning views are regularly possible. Both Yacht Basin and Tuna Roads are best over High Tide when waders and herons get pushed up close to and often on the road. I found Yacht Basin to be the better of the two visited with both Yellowlegs, Willets, Whimbrels and various herons right on the road. It is also meant to be a regular and easy place to see Clapper Rails at High Tide though I saw none. The loop highway 108 road that crosses Horseshoe Lake is also a good area and excellent views were obtained here of Short-billed Dowitchers, American Avocets and Marbled Godwits, far better in fact than the famous Bolivar Flats. Again getting the tide right here will be key to getting excellent views. Bolivar Flats reserve is often crammed packed with waders and again depending on tides, stunningly close views are possible of the peeps present. I had Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers on the tide edge just feet from the car. You can drive along the beach here, which enables close approach to the gathered mass of birds. Other waders are often present in huge numbers and it is likely this will be your only site for seeing Piping, Semipalmated and Wilson's Plovers. Terns, Gulls and Pelicans are present in large numbers. If the tide is out a fair walk may be involved in getting to the birds; if the tide is in they are often just a few feet away from the car.

### Sites further a field

- **Sabine Woods**

This excellent wood is about an hours drive from Winnie, about 1½ hours from High Island. The wood here has excellent mature trees, a number excellent pools and some excellent boardwalks and as a birding site is preferred over the High Island Woods. However it is very difficult for photography with no photo blinds with birds often high up in the canopy or in the dark under story. Further along the coast road is the Willows which has a boardwalk but limited parking space. It can often be a very good spot in the late afternoon for arriving migrants and has been known to trounce all over all other woods in terms of numbers and variety present.

- **Pattison Road**

I made an effort to go birding along Pattison Road in search of nesting Swainson's Warblers, suffice to say I did not find any at the sites detailed in the Cooksey and Weeks site guide though several pairs of Prothonotary Warblers on territory and a brief pair of Wood Ducks were here.

- **Winnie**

Just east, about 5 miles, along the highway towards Port Arthur were some flooded fields right next to the road. These flooded fields were just jam packed with hundreds of waders. There is a track that leads between them but with private signs. I was here in the morning but I would suspect that the evening would be better when the sun would have been from behind and the birds on the largest flooded field would have been better viewed. Waders here included the only Buff-breasted Sandpipers of the trip whilst more diligent searching may have resulted in Baird's and Stilts Sandpipers.

- **Big Reef Nature Reserve**

A decent site on the Galveston side of the ferry where over high tide shorebirds can be seen at very close range from the car parks, I was here at low tide thus the number of birds was well down. This was a stop off on the way to Brazos Bend.

- **Brazos Bend State Park**

This was the furthest point that I travelled from High Island, at least a 3 hour drive via Galveston. I spent only an afternoon here though perhaps over nighting and having a morning visit also would have been just as rewarding though the nearest town where motels are found is at least a 40minute drive away. There are a number of large lakes and swamps here with plenty of walking trails with the best probably being around Elm and Pilant Lakes to and beyond the observation tower. Herons, egrets and bitterns are easily seen here and whistling ducks and woodpeckers abound whilst there is a good range of breeding warblers. If visiting probably best not to arrive at a weekend when it will be busy with visitors from Houston. I was here on a Monday and had the place virtually to myself.

## Day to Day account

### **Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> April**

After a long British Airways flight to Houston it was a relief to find that getting through customs and collecting the hire car was a rapid affair. The drive to High Island took about an hour and a half with a few birds seen from car en-route with the most notable being the only Osprey of the trip, Laughing Gulls, various grackles and blackbirds, egrets and Eastern Kingbirds. Boy Scout wood was very quiet with few birds about but of note were a male Summer Tanager by the grandstand, a Purple Gallinule, Cardinals, a couple of Swamp Sparrows, a Carolina Wren, a fly over Royal Tern and brief Belted Kingfisher. After this headed off to the motel in Winnie.

### **Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> April**

The morning drive to Boy Scout Wood produced Little Blue Herons and many egrets as well as a flock of fly over Black-bellied Whistling Ducks. The wood was again quiet but there was at least a little more activity than before with a number of Northern Mockingbirds, Blue Jays, Collared and Mourning Doves, many Cardinals and Grey Catbirds, a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, a great Yellow-billed Cuckoo where the Cathedral used to be, Purple Martins and a House Wren where the Carolina Wren had been yesterday.

As it was a non event at the wood I decided to give Bolivar a go with the intention of returning later in the afternoon. Along the road I made a U-turn for a Willet in a roadside pool. This was the first seen and little did I know at the time was there was going to be so many more to come. Three stunning Scissor-tailed Flycatchers on roadside wires caused another U-turn only half a mile further along the road. It seemed at the time that birds were going to stop me from getting to the Flats. Flocks of Brown Pelicans flew along the coast and Loggerhead Shrikes were scattered along the road. Another stop at a cattle filled field produced five American Golden Plovers, none of which were in summer plumage.

On reaching Roll Over pass the car park nearby had a large flock of Laughing Gulls and Royal Terns and it was here that I spent a good few hours taking photos a close quarters. This really was entertaining birding with a first-year Bonaparte's Gull amongst the Laughers, up to 20 or more Forster's Terns, a fly over Black Tern, two Reddish Egrets including a fishing bird at point blank range; numerous egrets, a Great Blue Heron, three excellent Willets, Neotropical Cormorants in the bay, Tree and Barn Swallows

hawking past the car windows, several House Sparrows to remind me of home and a couple of first-summer Ring-billed Gulls. I almost filled an 8gig card from all this alone.

After grabbing a bite to eat from the nearby store I drove down Yacht Basin Road where the rather high High Tide had pushed many waders and herons close to the road. The views of Willets just feet away were superb. The highlights here were Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs side by side; Tricoloured Herons, many White Ibis, my first Marbled Godwits of the trip, Willets, Grey Plovers and several Great Blue Herons. Again great birding.

Due to the high tide it was impossible drive right along the beach at Bolivar Flats but with many waders at the end of Retillion Road there was little need to go far. Dunlin was the commonest wader present with a flock of around 500+. Mixed in amongst these were Western Sandpipers, Least Sandpipers and a few Semipalmated Sandpipers. Grey Plovers were off to one side whilst other plovers were represented with three Semipalmateds, two Wilson's, two Piping and a pair of Snowys. American Oystercatchers and American Avocets were scarce, only one of the former seen being the only one of the entire trip. Terns were well represented by many Royals and Forster's whilst there were also a Least Tern briefly and a couple of Gull-billeds, though there were many more of these later in the waters ways inland from the beach and dunes. A couple of Horned Larks ran around amongst the cars present.

The flooded area inland also had a good array of birds viewable from Retillion road with Blue-winged Teals and Mottled Ducks, 20+ Marbled Godwits, both yellowlegs, with a couple of each in the roadside ditch mere feet away, Savannah Sparrows, numerous herons and egrets and a couple of Eastern Meadowlarks. Another superb birding session.

With the woods still quiet I decided to make an afternoon visit to Anahuac, which provided even more new birds in rapid succession. Eastern Kingbirds were scattered around fence posts along with Eastern Meadowlarks whilst trackside verges held numerous Savannah Sparrows. There were many, 40+, White-faced Ibis on the floods but I did not check for any Glossy's. There were many herons here, i.e. 50+ Little Blue Herons, with lesser numbers of others such as a neat Little Bittern, a Black-crowned Night Heron, three Green Herons and a few Great Blue's. I walked the trail just south of the visitor centre in search of King Rail but failed in this quest but did have fine views of Palm Warblers, Swamp Sparrows, several male Yellowthroats, five Orchard Orioles, three Yellow-rumped Warblers, a probably Lincoln's Sparrow, a Downy Woodpecker and a White-winged Dove. Back at the road I flushed American Bittern from a pool and a Swainson's Hawk was being mobbed by a White-tailed Kite. All rapid fire birding.

Other raptors present were another White-tailed Kite, two Merlin's, a Northern Harrier, Turkey Vultures and a Sharp-shinned Hawk. Waders were concentrated in one area south of the visitor centre with a flock of dowitchers, probably Short-billeds, several Black-necked Stilts, Killdeers, Willets, four Hudsonian Whimbrels, Roseate Spoonbills, Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs. Blue-winged Teals were common here though other wildfowl were scarce, such as single Black-bellied and Fulvous Whistling Ducks and Mottled Duck.

Pied-billed Grebes were present on a few of the roadside pools along with American Coots and Moorhens though a Clapper Rail that walked out of the grass next to the road, past the front of the car and down past the side and then back into the grass on the other side of track that was so close I couldn't get it all one frame, great stuff.

After this excellent first day I arrived back at the motel at about 9pm with a hope that the following day would provide more warblers as they had been noticeably lacking, none had yet been seen from the woods.

### **Friday 11<sup>th</sup> April**

The drive to Sabine Pass from the motel in Winnie took about an hour and was straight forward enough. Once past the industrial areas numbers of herons, egrets, spoonbills and ibis's seen over or close to the road increased dramatically. A Buteo, probably a Red-tailed Hawk, was seen on a telegraph post but I didn't stop as I was intent on reaching the Willows at Sea Rim State Park. The Willows themselves were very quiet with a couple of very nice male Yellowthroats, a singing Orchard Oriole, many grackles, a few cowbirds, two Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, a Swamp Sparrow, a singing House Wren, five Whimbrels over head, a Blue-grey Gnatcatcher and a brief Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

After an hour I decided to drive back down the road to Sabine Woods as it was more likely to have birds than this small patch of low trees. It was initially quiet on entering the woods though a singing male

Summer Tanager by the T-junction of the boardwalk sounded just like a Song Thrush. Cardinals and Blue Jays were abundant but it wasn't until I reached the pool at the end of the boardwalk to the right that any number of birds were seen. There were a few birders present but they had not seen a great deal but I soon found a male Yellow-throated Warbler, which resulted in the Danish birders breaking into a short run. This has got to be one of the best of the American wood warblers, absolutely stunning. This was rapidly followed by two Yellow-rumped Warblers, a female Hooded Warbler, an Eastern Wood-pewee, three Ruby-crowned Kinglets and a fly over Green Heron. The rest of the morning was spent wandering the trails and boardwalks and birds came regularly but not in a rush. Up until early afternoon male and immature male Hooded Warblers were seen, along with Worm-eating Warbler, a stunning male Cerulean Warbler which was probably bird of the day, three male Prothonotary Warblers, a Black-and-white Warbler, a couple of Carolina Chickadees, three Catbirds, a Downy Woodpecker, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, a couple of Brown Thrashers, a nice Yellow-billed Cuckoo, lots of Baltimore Orioles, a briefly perched Sharp-shinned Hawk, four American Redstarts and a Northern Mockingbird. The singing Summer Tanager was present throughout. Phew. Seems like a lot but it was often slow going at times punctuated by small flurries of activity. The wood itself I found to be better than those at High Island with better mature trees that had not been wiped out by the hurricane.

During the heat of the day I drove back to Port Arthur for something to eat, a substandard McDonalds, before returning to find an increase in birds and a threatening weather front. Walking from the visitor shelter I came across a mixed flock that contained warblers, flycatchers and sparrows. This little burst of activity had a stunning male Yellow-rumped Warbler, a Yellowthroat high up in the canopy that looked out of place, two Nashville Warblers, male Scarlet Tanager, three White-throated Sparrows, an Eastern Wood-pewee, three Tennessee Warblers and a Red-eyed Vireo, not bad for 20minutes.

A tiny little pool was attracting a lot of birds with Blue Grosbeak and Tennessee Warblers being the most obvious seen. The main pool a few metres away was attracting a lot more birds as well as birders with comings and goings of Catbirds, Blue-winged Warblers and Northern Waterthrush with at least two of these here. However the threatening weather suddenly burst into life and a downpour ensued for about half an hour. Sheltering under a large tree a few of us watched as birds simply dropped in. There were at least a hundred orioles lighting up the trees, firstly Baltimores followed by Orchards, whilst warblers appeared with at least four Parula's, a Nashville Warbler and a couple of male Black-throated Green Warblers. Warbling Vireo, a White-eyed Vireo and a probably Least Flycatcher were also seen during this rush of feathers. This activity continued by the pool once the rain stopped and the sun came back out and there was also a sudden increase in birders who all enjoyed the avian delights. A couple of Painted Buntings were at the back of the pool, an Eastern Phoebe appeared briefly and the Parula's continued their matinee show.

After a while I wandered away from the crowd and was soon watching a brief Grey-cheeked Thrush along the track along the back of the pool as well as some of the same warblers plus several Summer and Scarlet Tanagers and a Brown Thrasher. As the afternoon wore on activity diminished but there was still some good birds to be seen. Probably the days third Cerulean Warbler was in the eastern side of the wood, unless it was an extremely mobile individual that just happened to be where ever I was, and a showy Kentucky Warbler low down in the under growth. Thrushes were scarce but I still managed to add a Veery, Hermit and Wood Thrushes to the earlier Grey-cheeked. These were to be some of the few thrushes I saw during the entire trip. Back at the car park a male Palm Warbler was in roadside trees by the Portaloo whilst the marsh directly opposite had many flying herons, ibis and cormorants.

Back along the road Loggerhead Shrikes and several Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were seen.

What a superb second full days birding.

### **Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April**

After yesterdays success at Sabine Wood I returned again this morning but it was to prove a little quieter with an obvious clear out of yesterday's bonanza. That said the morning still gave me some excellent birding. A Northern Harrier was seen near Port Arthur along with the first American Crow of the trip. Photography in this wood is difficult due to the dark under story but is superb for general birding, which for the most part is what I ended up doing. The following species were noted during my wanderings of the trails and boardwalks: a Blue-grey Gnatcatcher, an Eastern Kingbird, a fly over and slightly out of range Great Kiskadee, a Blue Jay, male and female Hooded Warblers, a couple of singing Yellowthroats, a nice Kentucky Warbler, a single Parula, a very showy Yellow-bellied Sapsucker right next to the boardwalk, only one remaining Orchard Oriole, two Northern Waterthrushes, one Tennessee Warbler, 6+ Grey Catbirds, three Yellow-rumped Warblers, a couple of Indigo Buntings, a Western Kingbird in the clearing

and two Baltimore Orioles. Fly over raptors, apart from the ever present Turkey Vultures, included a White-tailed Kite and a Broad-winged Hawk. Herons were constantly moving to a fro over the wood with Little Blue and Green Herons seen on a large pool in the cleared area at the back of the wood,

With the down turn in numbers of birds I decided to return to High Island for the afternoon and hope for an arrival of birds in the afternoon. Along Highway 73 en-route both Broad-winged and Swainson's Hawks were noted.

Boy Scout Wood was busy with people that probably outnumbered the birds. A very fine Yellow-throated Warbler was seen from the grandstand where the gathered crowd of birdwatchers were concentrated. Birding here was primarily at the drip by the grandstand as that seemed to have most of the birds with a Kentucky Warbler, a Northern Waterthrush, a lone Tennessee Warbler, four Chimney Swifts, male and three female Rose-breasted Grosbeaks by the grandstand, a Warbling Vireo, three Summer Tanagers, an immature male Hooded Warbler, Red-eyed Vireo, an Indigo Bunting, a Yellowthroat and a two soaring Anhingas.

News came through that there was a good warbler flock at Smith Oaks so I made a hasty exit to get there before most of those present had even cottoned on. Smith Oaks had more mature trees still standing after the hurricane than at Boy Scout it was my preferred favourite out of the two woods. Over the next couple of hours numerous warblers seen were though most induced the 'warbler neck' as they were generally directly above in the canopy. Two Parula's, three Yellow-throated Warblers, a Blue-grey Gnatcatcher, a stunning male Golden-winged Warbler (the only one of the trip), Blue-winged Warbler, a Black-and-white Warbler, a Tennessee Warbler were all seen whilst one particular tree had males of Black-throated Green, Cerulean and Prairie Warblers. Other birds here were Red-eyed Vireo, a Red-bellied Woodpecker, Grey Catbirds, four Blue-headed Vireos, a fine Yellow-throated Vireo, two Summer Tanagers, a stunningly bright male Scarlet Tanager and Baltimore Orioles. It was birds birds birds.

Despite this today was also my only chance to do the Rail walk at Anahuac so I left to get there for the 4pm start. I picked up four Scissor-tailed Flycatchers along the way.

The Rail walk itself was hard going but we succeeded in getting the hoped for Yellow Rail and excellent in brief views were obtained. To get the rails a rope with plastic bottles filled with stones is dragged across the damp meadow whilst the birders follow in a line behind. Rails and crakes will fly up in front of the line. In addition to the Yellow Rail we had four Virginia Rails and two Soras but we missed out on the Black Rails that had been around during previous walks. Also we had many Seaside Sparrows and a couple of Sedge Wrens. After returning the rubber boots to the visitor centre I drove around the reserve picking up a couple of Merlin's, a couple of Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs, three Black-necked Stilts, many Blue-winged Teals, White and White-faced Ibises and Roseate Spoonbills. A Northern Harrier was seen against the sun so not the best of views. Three Least Bitterns were seen well and the only Spotted Sandpiper of the trip was found at the boat ramp near the visitor centre. Two immature Black-crowned Night Herons were found there also whilst a Belted Kingfisher was all to brief. A further loop in the late evening gave me a showy American Bittern, a couple of Fulvous Whistling Ducks, many Eastern Meadowlarks and Eastern Kingbirds and lots of Mossies. Another great day.

### **Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> April**

Today didn't get off to the best of starts. I was a little late out of bed today and was late on the road to White Memorial Park. Along the highway was two American Crows and a Sharp-shinned Hawk. Due to road works the turn off that I needed was closed off with no obvious diversion and it took about half an hour to find a way to get to the site. On arriving I found that a lot of the under story had been removed since my visit five years ago and there was little birdlife with an Eastern Wood-pewee being the best bird seen. After a short drive round I decided to abandon ship and head towards Pattison Road to search for Swainson's Warblers in their breeding area. I was however distracted by a couple of flooded fields a few miles east of Winnie. I saw these fields as I headed east which appeared to hold a number of waders so I made a rapid u-turn. What I found after I pulled up was a bucket load of waders and it was game back on again. The first field was only partially flooded whilst the next one over was completely flooded with majority of waders on this one. However the only Buff-breasted Sandpipers were on the former. A private track separated to two fields, which I explored a little way with no one shouting 'Oi get off my land'. This enable me to get the light behind me for the birds on the partially flooded field and I was able to spend a couple of hours photographing Pectoral Sandpipers, American Golden Plovers, Short-billed Dowitchers and both Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs at close range. The Buff-breasts were unfortunately a little too distant. The other field was directly into the sun so I intended on returning in the evening when the sun would have moved to behind me, though this didn't go to plan and I never came back. In total these fields

had a huge number of waders with estimated counts of around 250+ Pectoral Sandpipers, 70+ American Golden Plovers, 25+ Semipalmated Plovers, 300 Short-billed Dowitchers, 100+ each of Great and Lesser Yellowlegs, 10+ Killdeers, 4 Buff-breasted Sandpipers, several Hudsonian Whimbrels, a couple of inland Willets, Laughing Gulls, a few Least Sandpipers, and 40+ scattered Semipalmated Sandpipers. If I had better light on the main pool I would have no doubt have found Stilt and Baird's Sandpipers.

Non waders present included Sand Martins, Cliff Swallows, bucket loads of Red-winged Blackbirds, three Mottled Ducks. It was just excellent birding. With the day moving on I needed to leave to get to Pattison Road to have any chance of getting singing Swainson's Warblers so I reluctantly dragged myself away.

En-route I came across a flock of Black Vultures on a back road feeding on road kill Armadillos which took up a further 20minutes of my time. On arriving at the site along Pattison Road it was clear I was no too late but I gave the area a go anyway. I did find several territories of Prothonotary Warblers along with a pair of brief fly over Wood Ducks. Other warblers here were Tennessee Warbler and three Parula's whilst two Carolina Chickadees were vocal along the road. An adult Black-crowned Night Heron was deep in cover whilst a Sharp-shinned Hawk was soaring above along with numerous Anhingas. It was clear that I should have been here far earlier so it was time to go. I decided to give the rice fields at Nome ago. This was a total waste of several hours as most fields were dry or had zero waders in those that were damp. It didn't take me long to decide to leave and head towards High Island.

At Boy Scout Wood I spent a little time at the photo blind but generally things were quiet but a few decent birds were photographed. I also had a short walk around the trails so I ended up with a few things worth putting in the note book, notably three Kentucky Warblers, Purple Gallinule, Green Heron, two Swamp Sparrows, three Eastern Kingbirds, a male Scarlet Tanager, a couple of Parula's, two Blue-winged Warblers, a Tennessee Warbler, Orchard Oriole, Blue-headed Vireo, many Cardinals, a Carolina Wren and a White-eyed Vireo. Slow going but all quality birds.

As the early evening light was superb I visited the rookery at Smith Oaks where the sun was from behind. The egrets, herons and Roseate Spoonbills were all perfectly lit and some stunning images were obtained. Definitely visit here in the afternoons to get the best light conditions. After spending a little time here I walked the wood which was a little inactive but a few birds were dug out including a male Hooded Warbler, a Worm-eating Warbler, a Parula and a male Summer Tanager.

So today was a mixed bag day of successes and failures but was at least varied.

### **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> April**

My mornings were gradually getting later but this didn't affect overall the birding at High Island. I started off this morning at Boy Scout Wood, which was again a little quieter, though compared with a wood or coastal location in the UK there is no comparison. I found a nice sunny spot out the back of the wood where Parula's, Tennessee Warblers and male Hooded Warbler put on a private show just for me. Elsewhere around the wood the now usual suspects were seen with both orioles, Summer Tanager, Blue Jays, Eastern Kingbird, Purple Martins and Southern Rough-winged Swallows, Grey Catbirds and Red-bellied Woodpecker. In addition to these were further Hooded Warblers, both Red-eyed, two White-eyed, Blue-headed and Warbling Vireos at the photo blind, a couple of Kentucky Warblers there also, three Chimney Swifts, a female Merlin sat in a tree by the Grandstand, a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, a brief Yellow-rumped Warbler, a Brown Thrasher at the blind and Anhinga's soaring over the town.

I had packed my gear for an overnight away so it was now time to head off along Bolivar Peninsula where Swallows were apparently coming in off the sea. At Bolivar Flats late morning there were White-tailed Kite and a Northern Harrier whilst a White Pelican was amongst the flock of Brown Pelicans in the distance. Royal Terns were gathered en-mass on the flats whilst waders were represented by single Piping and Wilson's Plovers. The tide was well out so there was little need to linger. I drove to 108 Loop road to Horseshoe Lake where there were at least 200 Short-billed Dowitchers, a close Mottled Duck on a small pool, 200+ American Avocets in various stages of progression towards summer plumage, 140+ Marbled Godwits, two Least Terns, many Forster's and Gull-billed Terns and four Black-necked Stilts.

The Ferry crossing to Galveston was hot but there was at least a lot of Laughing Gulls and Pelican at the terminal. Many of these followed the ferry. On the other side a White-winged Dove was seen along State Highway 168. I made a short visit to Corp Woods though as this was during the heat of the day it was a little quiet though a Parula was near the entrance gate. A Blue-grey Gnatcatcher was seen from the observation platform and a Greater Yellowlegs flew past.

Next up was the nearby Big Reef Nature Reserve. As the tide was out the number of waders were down and not the close views I had hoped for. Never the less there were a few birds about with good views of Gull-billed, Royal, Forster's and 29 Least Terns plus a flock of around 300 Skimmers and many Pelicans. Other sightings were an adult Black-crowned night Heron in a ditch and 14 American Herring Gulls on the flats.

With the lack of action I headed off for the long drive to Brazos Bend State Park. I got a little lost at a confusion junction but arrived late afternoon at the park entrance. Close to the turn off a Peregrine flew over Farm Road 4672.

After paying the entrance fee and finding out that the nearest motels were probably about 40minutes away I headed off to the car park at Elm Lake. A Red-shouldered Hawk flew over the road whilst a Swainson's Hawk circled the car park. It was clear that there was very few people here and I was to virtually have the place to myself, excellent. I walked the very good trail past Elm Lake to Pilant Lake with a stop off at the observation tower. This walk took most of my afternoon as there was so much to stop and photograph. Blue-winged Teals, American Coots and Alligators were all at point blank range. Numerous Alligators were draped across the path which required a wide berth. Herons were common here with numerous Black-crowned Night Herons but pride of place goes to the Yellow-crowned Night Heron and American Bittern by the tower. The Bittern walked across the path right in front of me mere feet away whilst the Night Heron allowed careful approach as it fished. Stunning.

Pied-billed Grebes were very common and were often found in loose flocks of three or more birds. Of the three Killdeers seen one posed at point blank range trying to stare me out. Other egrets and herons were constantly flying over but several Green Herons hunted the pools close to the path. Barred Owls were heard calling but could not be called in. There were several Black-bellied Whistling Duck flock around the lakes, they breed at this park. Male Prothonotary Warblers were on territory but difficult to photograph which couldn't be said for a pair of Carolina Wrens that were very interested in the camera shutter sound. This had the benefit of keeping the birds right where I wanted them. A stunning pair of Pileated Woodpeckers played tag around the lakes whilst a Red-bellied Woodpecker was almost overlooked during this activity. Again a Belted Kingfisher was seen all too briefly and I was resigned to not getting close views of this species. I finished up late evening with a Blue-grey Gnatcatcher near the car park and Red-tailed Hawk back along the road.

As I had well here I decided to return to Winnie and not stay over but as the Galveston route would likely be a nightmare I decided to drive to the Houston Circular Highway and pay the tolls. This meant that my return drive was only two hours instead of probably closer to four by returning via Galveston and High Island. I was back at the motel by 9pm.

## **Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> April**

For a change I started off at Smith Oaks which was as most mornings at Boy Scout Wood, quiet. However there was still a few good birds seen with several of both orioles, a number of Northern Mockingbirds, three Parula's, a Tennessee Warbler, a Prothonotary Warbler, a male Yellowthroat, numerous Rough-winged Swallows, a Solitary Sandpiper around the lakes, a Belted Kingfisher that would have provided some excellent scope views had I brought my scope along, a Sharp-shinned Hawk, a Pied-billed Grebe and five Black-crowned Night Herons.

I made a short stop at Eubanks wood on the way to the coast just to see what it was like and apart from a mockingbird in the parking lot I saw nothing around the loop trail. It was then off down Bolivar again with stops for the same Scissor-tailed Flycatchers as before, two Long-billed Curlews in the American Golden Plover field, a Swainson's Hawk on wires and a pair of Northern Harriers. Meadowlarks were more widespread than I had noted before.

I visit Horseshoe Lake again along loop road 108 where there was at least 40 Short-billed Dowitchers at close range. Other waders were present, namely Willets, Semipalmated Plover, 60+ American Avocets, Marbled Godwits and Black-necked Stilts. As the tide was up there were less numbers than my previous visit here. In addition there were plenty of fishing Forster's and Least Terns, a distant Reddish Egret and a couple of flighty Mottled Ducks.

The nearby flats in contrast had even less birds with the White Pelican still distantly with the Browns. I stopped off at Roll Over Pass where the falling tide had revealed mudflats where five White Pelicans were with the Browns and there were a lot of Laughing Gulls but little else.

The rest of the afternoon and early evening was spent in the photo blind at Boy Scout which produced a number of eminently photographable species. There were a good selection of warblers with excellent Black-and-white's, a couple of stunning Parula's, a couple of excellent Black-throated Green Warblers, a Kentucky, a male Hooded, an elusive Yellowthroat and a Worm-eating. The Brown Thrasher was still coming and going, four Summer and two male Scarlet Tanagers, a female Rose-breasted Grosbeak, five Orchard Orioles, a Swainson's Thrush, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Red-eyed, white-eyed and Warbling Vireos, a male Indigo Bunting, a brief male Painted Bunting and a Carolina Wren whilst a bright Baltimore Oriole was by the Grandstand as I was leaving. When activity dropped away I headed to the near Oilfields to search for waders and it was to prove a good move.

There was clearly a lot of waders at the Oilfields with about 40 Lesser and 10 Greater Yellowlegs, a single Least Sandpiper, 30+ Short-billed Dowitchers, 5 Killdeers, 12+ black-necked Stilts and lots of both Ibis. Three Clapper Rails were also seen briefly in the damp corners. The dowitchers allowed some excellent photo opportunities with birds just feet away so I was resolved to visiting her first thing in the morning.

### **Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> April**

My plans had changed overnight to driving to Boyton north of Big Thicket in search of some Pine Woods species. As I was not paying attention I ended up on the road to Port Arthur which meant I would arrive a good hour to an hour and half later than I should do. When I arrived in the birding area at Boyton Springs I immediately found Pine Warblers but I soon came to realise that there was bugger all else. I did manage to find a pair of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and a Carolina Wren but it was decision time, go to a nearby site or abandon it altogether. I chose the latter. I was back at Boy Scout Wood by midday but there was only a little activity at photo blind and around the wood. Indeed best of the bunch seen were a White-throated Sparrow, a Prothonotary Warbler, a female Hooded Warbler, a pair of Indigo Buntings, a brief male Yellowthroat, trip ticked an Orange-crowned Warbler, the Brown Thrasher was still there, males of Scarlet and Summer Tanagers, life ticked, finally, a brief Yellow-breasted Chat and a couple of Blue-headed Vireos.

I thought Bolivar could be good so I started off along Tuna road with the tide up but most birds were well spread out with the expected Willets and Whimbrels. The rest of the day was at the flats where some superb wader watching was to be had. The tide was falling and the 'peeps' were rapidly gathering in numbers along the waters edge. I was able to carefully drive along the beach just feet away getting full frame shots of both Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers side by side and in a variety of plumages. This was excellent birding and I filled my 8gig card rather quickly. Other waders here were many Sanderlings and Turnstones whilst plovers were represented by a few Piping and Wilson's. As with the sandpipers the Royal Terns, American Herring and Ring-billed Gulls allowed close approach in the car, they would have flown had I got out of the car. Pelicans soared past just over the waves whilst Least Terns fished and sat on the beach just arms length away. Superb. This was a just and fitting close to the day that began disastrously.

### **Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> April**

I started at the Oilfields where I should have been yesterday. The light was even better here in the morning with the waders on the better pools lit perfectly. The same range of species as yesterday were present, along with a Long-billed Curlew distantly flying off, but views of the point blank Least Sandpipers kept me busy for a good few hours. Blue-winged Teals seemed to be everywhere.

The Boy Scout photo blind was not to the standard of yesterday with far fewer birds and most of the photographers had given up. I gave it a few hours before I did the same with only a handful of birds putting in an appearance. A cracking male Indigo Bunting was close the Grandstand.

I was reliably informed of Wilson's Phalaropes being in at Anahuac so it was here that I now headed for. The floods to the south of the visitor centre held majority of the waders and I eventually picked out a simply stunning, if distant, female phalarope. Also here were a range of waders including 40+ summer plumages Stilt Sandpipers, 40+ dowitchers, numerous SemiP Plovers, an American Golden Plover, Dunlins, SemiP Sands, PecSands, Least Sands both the yellowlegs and a nearby Least Bittern. Excellent if windy birding.

Back at Boy Scout Wood not much had changed at the photo blind which I now had all to myself. Pick of the bunch were three male Painted Buntings that visited, a single and then later two together. By late afternoon something was up and clearly there was an arrival of birds as they were queuing up to get to

the water. There adult males, immature males and female Summer Tanagers, at least ten Orchard Orioles, a Yellow Warbler, Blue-headed Vireo, a male Scarlet Tanager, a female Painted Bunting, a female Black-and-white Warbler and a male Yellowthroat. Once all of these birds had had a bathe activity tailed off rapidly.

Back at Purkeys Pool by the grandstand the apparently resident Northern Waterthrush was seen again.

#### **Friday 18<sup>th</sup> April**

Penultimate day had some expectation as there was the possibility of a fall due to good looking weather conditions. Started off at Boy Scout Wood, though perhaps should have made a last visit to Sabine Woods. It was a little quiet as is the norm in the mornings with a couple of Chimney Swifts, a single Summer Tanager, a Red-eyed Vireo, the usual Northern Waterthrush, two Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and a Downy Woodpecker, all by the Grandstand. I returned to Anahuac to look at the Wilson's Phalarope to find a flock of ten of these crackers. Stilt Sandpipers were also here in numbers as before along with more Semipalmated Sandpipers. I made a drive around the tracks picking up four Purple Gallinules, many dowitchers, a Least Bittern, numerous Mottled Ducks, a Northern Harrier and two Scissor-tailed Flycatchers by the reserve entrance.

Back at the Boy Scout photo blind it was all very quiet with a sole Blue-winged Warbler and an elusive Yellowthroat.

I was then given information that there was a Louisiana Waterthrush at the Willows at Anahuac and as this would be my, presumed, last chance to tick this bird I returned there. The bird gave me the run around but eventually showed well as my legs were being bitten to bits by angry ants. There were also a few Orchard Orioles, a Yellowthroat and a Downy Woodpecker on a reed stem! I returned again to Boy Scout Wood where there was a Baltimore Oriole, many Tennessee Warblers, a Red-eyed Vireo, a male Prothonotary Warbler at Purkeys Pool, three Scarlet Tanagers and a couple of Black-and-white Warblers. From speaking to people at the grandstand, where I missed Blackpoll and Golden-winged Warbler, it was clear birds were arriving so I went to Smith Oaks to get away from the very large crowd.

Even as I drove down the track to the car park Indigo Buntings were seen flying over. The car park was nearly empty of cars but there was plenty of birds moving through the trees here with more Indigo Buntings you shake a stick at along with many Tennessee Warblers, numerous Orchard and Baltimore Orioles, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher and males of both the tanagers.

Walking the wood I found in quick succession males of Blackburnian (first and only of the trip), Black-throated Green and Yellow Warblers much to the delight of some birders nearby. The track we were along also gave me a Wood Thrush, a Northern Waterthrush, Red-eyed Vireo, a hummingbird and a Swamp Sparrow.

I returned briefly to Boy Scout but was soon tipped off to some excellent warblers at Hooks Wood not to far away. However as it was getting late most were missed with male Black-throated Green Warblers and American Redstarts being favourites in the wood whilst at least 10 or more waterthrushes were out on the tarmac road where at least one was identified as a Louisiana. A male Hooded Warbler was also nearby and an Eastern Wood-pewee.

So here would be where I would start on my last morning.

#### **Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> April**

An early and final start at Hooks Wood. I began by walking down the road to where the waterthrushes had been. In the mature trees here were a couple of Black-and-white Warblers, several Blue-winged Warblers and a male Black-throated Green Warbler with more seen in the wood a little later in the morning. Two Blue Jays were on a garden lawn nearby but there was no sign of yesterdays Yellow-headed Blackbird in the cattle paddock. Two Northern Waterthrushes were still present along the road.

The wood was very popular with birds and birders with a male and a couple of female Summer Tanagers, three male and a female Hooded Warbler, a fine Parula, White-eyed and Red-eyed Vireo, many Indigo Buntings following on from yesterdays arrivals, an Ovenbird low down under the undergrowth, three cracking American Redstarts and another Eastern Wood-pewee. Worm-eating Warblers showed at point blank range next to the boardwalk showed exceptionally well. A Kentucky Warbler shared the same under story areas as the Ovenbird which was seen a few more times. A Yellow-rumped Warbler was the first seen for sometime but pride of place goes to the Swainson's Warbler that I found feeding close to the

path. It was difficult to see but a few other birders managed to see it. Yellowthroats, Orioles and a Yellow-billed Cuckoo completed the woodland bonanza.

Back out on the road two male Yellow-headed Blackbirds were found in the cattle pen though only one remained long enough to photograph. Also in the pen were Inca and White-winged Doves amongst the grackles.

Boy Scout Wood was next port of call and there were plenty of birds and birders around. Just around the grandstand were a male Painted Bunting, a pair of Rose-breasted Grosbeak, the Northern Waterthrush, a Black-and-white Warbler, a Yellow-throated and Red-eyed Vireo, a nice Blue-winged Warbler, a single Worm-eating Warbler and a Red-bellied Woodpecker.

As a last shout before I needed to head back towards Houston and the flight back to the UK I made a return visit to Hooks Wood where the same species were seen this morning but with stunning views of Worm-eating Warblers, American Redstarts and Black-and-white Warblers along with Hooded and Kentucky Warblers.

It was now a shame that I had to leave as it finally seemed that migrants were arriving en-mass, this is confirmed by looking at the High Island Birds Website and again confirmed my own assumption that I was a little to early for most of the migration but you can only do what you can do.

I had five Scissor-tailed Flycatchers along Route 65 towards the I10 and then that was it, flight back to the UK.

### **Summary**

I think a visit later by about a weeks start, probably from about 18<sup>th</sup> of the month would be more beneficial in getting the larger numbers of warblers and other migrants though species such as Swainson's and Yellow-throated Warblers and Louisiana Waterthrushes pass through earlier but stragglers will always pass through. The trip itself was very enjoyable with great looks at most of the birds seen with great photo opportunities and off the back of this trip I will almost certainly make a return visit.