

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE

# BIRDS

OF

BRAZOS BEND  
STATE PARK



A FIELD CHECKLIST

2006

Cover: Illustration of Henslow's Sparrow by Rob Fleming.

November 2006

# INTRODUCTION

**B**razos Bend State Park, a 4,977-acre tract located in Fort Bend County, is situated next to the Brazos River and is representative of the rich wildlife habitat known most commonly as the "Brazos Bottomlands." This habitat is typical of many riverine areas of the southeast part of Texas and adjacent Louisiana. The combination of bottomland hardwood forest, a major river, a large tributary, lakes, ponds, and grasslands provides food, cover and living areas for the wildlife indigenous to the area.

The parkland supports three major terrestrial habitats: Live Oak woodland, bottomland hardwoods and tall grass coastal prairie. The Live Oak woodland has numerous large Live Oak trees festooned with Spanish Moss. This community occupies an ancient meander scarp of the Brazos River. The bottomland hardwoods consist of Pecan, Burr Oak, Water Oak, Live Oak and Elm. The tall grass coastal prairie has Little Bluestem, Indian Grass, Bushy Bluestem and Switchgrass. Some of the best terrestrial birding is at the transition zones where two habitats meet (i.e., tall grass coastal prairie/Live Oak woodland edge).

Brazos Bend State Park has a rich and varied birdlife. Historically, Attwater's Prairie Chicken occurred here. The large variety of resident species is joined at various times of the year by migrants going north or south, by species wintering within the upper Texas coastal area, or by species which nest in the park and migrate south for the winter. Thus, depending upon seasonal factors, there are large fluctuations in both the number of bird species and the number of individuals present in the park. In addition, like all areas bordering the Gulf of Mexico in the southern United States, weather plays an important role in the bird population within the park, especially during peak migration of neotropical species during spring and fall. For example, during late April or early May, a heavy thunderstorm can ground many birds, and after the storm passes the bird population of the park is noticeably greater for a brief period.

Though the park's habitats are varied, the primary attractant for birdlife is the abundance of water within the park and along the Brazos River bordering the park's east side. Particularly rewarding areas for birders are the park's three largest water bodies—40 Acre, Elm and Pilant Lakes. Depending on the season, these lakes contain many wading birds, waterfowl, shorebirds and other species which are attracted to the woodlands bordering the lakes. 40 Acre and Elm Lakes are easily accessible by trails. Pilant Lake supports several large rookeries. Some nesting by wading birds also occurs at Elm Lake. Visitors should concentrate their bird-watching in these three areas if their time is limited.

This checklist includes 304 species documented within the park itself and an adjacent area within the park's 15-mile-diameter Christmas Bird Count (CBC) circle. In addition, a short list of several species to be expected is included at the end of the checklist. These species are expected because of the park's habitat and the status of these species on the upper Texas coast. Of the species recorded, 88 have been confirmed as nesting within the park and adjacent area.

Numerous species of reptiles, amphibians and mammals may also be found. Most visible are the American Alligator, Nine-banded Armadillo, White-tailed Deer and Raccoon. Feral hogs may also be seen and, as with the alligators, great care should be taken when around these animals.

Originally this checklist was compiled by James G. Morgan and Ted Eubanks, Jr., based on their visits during a four-and-one-half-year period prior to the opening of the park. Noteworthy contributors to this list were Kelly Bryan, Marilyn Crane, T. Paul and Margaret Jones, and Geneva LaVerne. Revisions and updates were completed in 2006 by Bill Godley and David Heinicke.

You may contribute to this checklist by reporting new and unusual sightings or changes in status on the Sighting Report forms available at the park headquarters. Please forward the completed forms to the Natural Resource Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744. Nomenclature and order for this checklist are based on the Seventh Edition of the A.O.U. *Check-list of North American Birds* as currently supplemented.

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*Please help us protect the natural avian communities in our parks by refraining from using playback recordings of bird songs. Frequent use of recordings disrupts normal avian activity patterns, disrupts essential territorial behavior and may lead to nest failure. Thank you for your cooperation.*

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## LEGEND

**Spring: March – May**

**Summer: June – July**

**Fall: August – November**

**Winter: December – February**

a – Abundant: 40 or more per day

c – Common: 10–40 per day

f – Fairly common: 4–10 per day

u – Uncommon: Less than 4 per day

r – Rare: 1–3 per season

x – Accidental: Out of normal range

\* – Nest in the park and/or adjacent area

## CHECKLIST

Spring   Summer   Fall   Winter

### FAMILY ANATIDAE • Geese & Ducks

* ___ Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	f	c	c	c
___ Fulvous Whistling-Duck	u	u	u	u
___ Greater White-fronted Goose	u		c	a
___ Snow Goose	u		c	a
___ Ross's Goose		x		u
___ Cackling Goose	r		r	r
___ Canada Goose	u		r	c
___ Tundra Swan				x
* ___ Wood Duck	f	c	c	c

	<u>Spring</u>	<u>Summer</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>Winter</u>
___ Gadwall	f		c	a
___ American Wigeon	f		c	a
___ Mallard	u		c	c
* ___ Mottled Duck	u	u	u	u
* ___ Blue-winged Teal	c	r	c	a
___ Cinnamon Teal	r		r	u
___ Northern Shoveler	c		c	a
___ Northern Pintail	u		f	a
___ Green-winged Teal	f		f	a
___ Canvasback	r			u
___ Redhead			u	u
___ Ring-necked Duck	f		f	a
___ Greater Scaup	r		r	
___ Lesser Scaup	f		f	f
___ White-winged Scoter				x
___ Bufflehead	u		f	f
___ Common Goldeneye				r
___ Hooded Merganser	r		u	u
___ Red-breasted Merganser	r			
___ Masked Duck	x		x	x
___ Ruddy Duck	u	r	f	f
<u>FAMILY PHAISANIDAE • Gallinaceous Birds</u>				
* ___ Wild Turkey	u	u	u	u
<u>FAMILY ODONTOPHORIDAE • New World Quail</u>				
* ___ Northern Bobwhite	f	f	f	f
<u>FAMILY GAVIIDAE • Loons</u>				
___ Common Loon	x			
<u>FAMILY PODICIPEDIDAE • Grebes</u>				
___ Least Grebe	x			x
* ___ Pied-billed Grebe	c	f	c	c
___ Eared Grebe	u		r	u
<u>FAMILY PELECANIDAE • Pelicans</u>				
___ American White Pelican	u		c	c
___ Brown Pelican				r

Spring   Summer   Fall   Winter

FAMILY PHALACROCORACIDAE • Cormorants

___ Neotropic Cormorant	r			r
___ Double-crested Cormorant	c	u	f	c

FAMILY ANHINGIDAE • Anhingas

* ___ Anhinga	c	c	c	f
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FAMILY ARDEIDAE • Herons

___ American Bittern	u			f
* ___ Least Bittern	u	f		
* ___ Great Blue Heron	f	f	f	f
* ___ Great Egret	c	c	c	c
* ___ Snowy Egret	f	f	f	f
* ___ Little Blue Heron	f	f	f	f
___ Tricolored Heron	f	f	f	f
___ Reddish Egret		x		
* ___ Cattle Egret	c	c	c	u
* ___ Green Heron	f	c	f	r
* ___ Black-crowned Night-Heron	u	u	u	c
* ___ Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	c	c	c	r

FAMILY THRESKIORNITHIDAE • Ibises & Spoonbills

* ___ White Ibis	a	a	a	a
___ Glossy Ibis	r			x
___ White-faced Ibis	f	f	f	c
* ___ Roseate Spoonbill	u	c	f	r

FAMILY CICONIIDAE • Storks

___ Wood Stork		f	f	
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FAMILY CATHARTIDAE • American Vultures

* ___ Black Vulture	c	c	c	c
* ___ Turkey Vulture	c	c	a	a

FAMILY ACCIPITRIDAE • Kites & Hawks

Subfamily Pandioninae • Ospreys

___ Osprey	r	r	r	r
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Subfamily Accipitrinae • Accipters

___ Swallow-tailed Kite	r	r		
* ___ White-tailed Kite	u	u	u	u

	<u>Spring</u>	<u>Summer</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>Winter</u>
* ___ Mississippi Kite	u	c	c	
___ Bald Eagle	u		r	u
___ Northern Harrier	r		u	f
___ Sharp-shinned Hawk	u		u	u
___ Cooper's Hawk	u		u	u
___ Harris's Hawk			r	r
* ___ Red-shouldered Hawk	c	c	c	c
___ Broad-winged Hawk	u		f	
___ Swainson's Hawk	u	r	u	x
* ___ White-tailed Hawk	r	r	r	r
* ___ Red-tailed Hawk	u	u	f	c
___ Ferruginous Hawk				r
___ Rough-legged Hawk				x
___ Golden Eagle				x

#### FAMILY FALCONIDAE • Falcons

* ___ Crested Caracara	f	u	f	f
___ American Kestrel	u		c	c
___ Merlin			r	u
___ Peregrine Falcon	r		r	r

#### FAMILY RALLIDAE • Rails, Coots & Gallinules

___ King Rail	u	r		u
___ Virginia Rail	r			
___ Sora	r			r
* ___ Purple Gallinule	f	c	u	
* ___ Common Moorhen	c	c	f	f
* ___ American Coot	c	u	c	c

#### FAMILY GRUIDAE • Cranes

___ Sandhill Crane	f		c	c
___ Whooping Crane				x

#### FAMILY CHARADRIIDAE • Plovers

___ Black-bellied Plover	r			
___ American Golden-Plover	f			u
___ Snowy Plover	r	r		
___ Wilson's Plover	r			
___ Semipalmated Plover			r	
* ___ Killdeer	c	c	c	c



Spring   Summer   Fall   Winter

FAMILY RECURVIROSTRIDAE • Stilts

* ___ Black-necked Stilt	f	c	f	
___ American Avocet		r		

FAMILY SCOLOPACIDAE • Sandpipers

___ Spotted Sandpiper	u	u	u	u
___ Solitary Sandpiper	u		u	
___ Greater Yellowlegs	u	u	f	u
___ Willet		x		
___ Lesser Yellowlegs	f	u	f	u
___ Upland Sandpiper	u		u	
___ Long-billed Curlew	u	r	r	u
___ Ruddy Turnstone			x	
___ Semipalmated Sandpiper	u	u	u	
___ Western Sandpiper	u	u	u	u
___ Least Sandpiper	c	c	c	c
___ Baird's Sandpiper	x			
___ Pectoral Sandpiper	u	u	u	r
___ Dunlin				r
___ Stilt Sandpiper			r	
___ Long-billed Dowitcher	u		u	
___ Wilson's Snipe	f		u	f
___ American Woodcock				r

FAMILY LARIDAE • Gulls, Terns & Skimmers

Subfamily Larinae • Gulls

___ Laughing Gull	u		u	
___ Franklin's Gull	u		u	r
___ Ring-billed Gull			u	u
___ Herring Gull				x

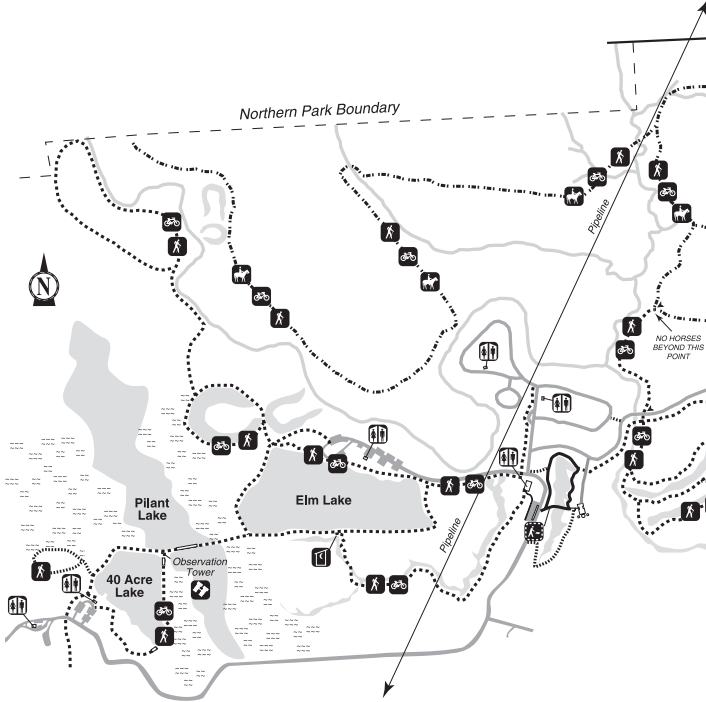
Subfamily Sterninae • Terns

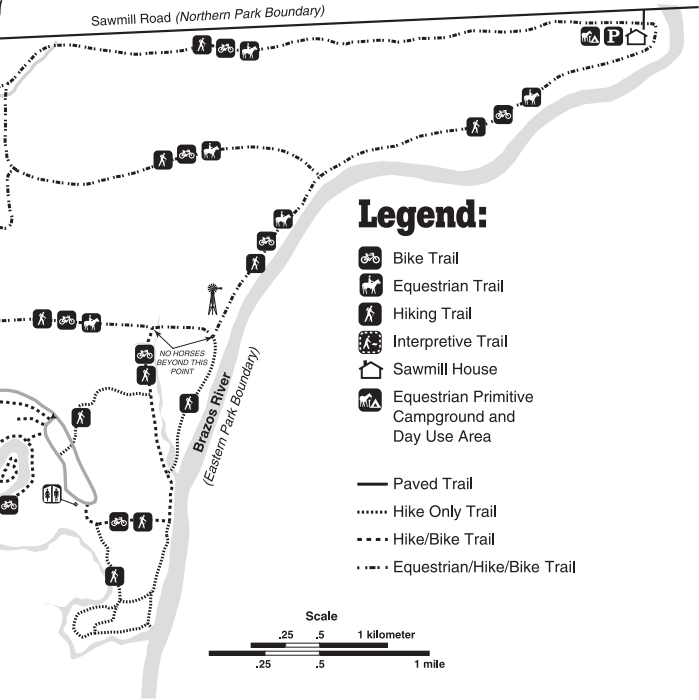
___ Least Tern	u	u	u	
___ Caspian Tern	u		u	u
___ Black Tern	u	u	u	
___ Forster's Tern		u	u	u
___ Royal Tern				r

Subfamily Rynchopinae • Skimmers

___ Black Skimmer	x	x		
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# BRAZOS BEND STATE PARK TRAILS





Spring   Summer   Fall   Winter

FAMILY COLUMBIDAE • Doves

* ___ Rock Pigeon	f	f	f	f
* ___ Eurasian Collared-Dove	c	c	c	c
* ___ White-winged Dove	u	u	u	u
* ___ Mourning Dove	c	c	c	c
* ___ Inca Dove	u			u
* ___ Common Ground-Dove	u		u	u

FAMILY CUCULIDAE • Cuckoos & Roadrunners

Subfamily Coccyzinae • Cuckoos

* ___ Yellow-billed Cuckoo	f	f	f	
___ Black-billed Cuckoo	r			

Subfamily Neomorphinae • Roadrunners

___ Greater Roadrunner	r			
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Subfamily Crotophaginae • Anis

___ Groove-billed Ani			r	
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FAMILY TYTONIDAE • Barn Owls

* ___ Barn Owl	u	u	u	u
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FAMILY STRIGIDAE • Owls

* ___ Eastern Screech-Owl	r	r	r	r
* ___ Great Horned Owl	u	u	u	u
* ___ Barred Owl	f	f	f	c
___ Burrowing Owl			r	r

FAMILY CAPRIMULGIDAE • Nightjars

* ___ Common Nighthawk	f	f	f	
___ Chuck-Will's-Widow	r			

FAMILY APODIDAE • Swifts

___ Chimney Swift	f	u	u	
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FAMILY TROCHILIDAE • Hummingbirds

* ___ Ruby-throated Hummingbird	f	u	f	r
___ Black-chinned Hummingbird	f	u	f	r
___ Rufous Hummingbird	r		r	

Spring   Summer   Fall   Winter

FAMILY ALCEDINIDAE • Kingfishers

___	Ringed Kingfisher			x	
* ___	Belted Kingfisher	r	u	u	u

FAMILY PICIDAE • Woodpeckers

___	Red-headed Woodpecker	r			r
___	Golden-fronted Woodpecker				x
* ___	Red-bellied Woodpecker	c	c	c	c
___	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	u		f	f
* ___	Ladder-backed Woodpecker	r	r	r	r
___	Downy Woodpecker	f	f	f	f
___	Hairy Woodpecker				r
___	Northern Flicker	f		f	f
* ___	Pileated Woodpecker	f	f	f	f

FAMILY TYRANNIDAE • Flycatchers

___	Olive-sided Flycatcher	r			r
* ___	Eastern Wood-Pewee	f	u	r	
___	Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	u	r	f	
* ___	Acadian Flycatcher	c	c		
___	Alder Flycatcher	r		u	
___	Willow Flycatcher	r			
___	Least Flycatcher	r			
___	Black Phoebe	x			x
___	Eastern Phoebe	u		c	c
___	Say's Phoebe	x		x	x
___	Vermilion Flycatcher	u		u	u
___	Ash-throated Flycatcher				r
* ___	Great Crested Flycatcher	f	f	f	
___	Brown-crested Flycatcher	x			
___	Great Kiskadee	x			
___	Couch's Kingbird			x	x
___	Western Kingbird	r			
* ___	Eastern Kingbird	f	f	f	
* ___	Scissor-tailed Flycatcher	c	c	c	

FAMILY LANIIDAE • Shrikes

* ___	Loggerhead Shrike	f	f	f	f
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Spring   Summer   Fall   Winter

FAMILY VIREONIDAE • Vireos

* ___ White-eyed Vireo	c	c	f	u
___ Blue-headed Vireo	u		u	f
* ___ Yellow-throated Vireo	u	u	u	
___ Warbling Vireo	r			
___ Philadelphia Vireo	u		r	
* ___ Red-eyed Vireo	u	u	u	

FAMILY CORVIDAE • Jays & Crows

* ___ Blue Jay	f	f	f	f
* ___ American Crow	c	c	a	a

FAMILY ALAUDIDAE • Larks

___ Horned Lark	u	u		u
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FAMILY HIRUNDINIDAE • Swallows

* ___ Purple Martin	f	c	u	
___ Tree Swallow	c		f	r
___ Northern Rough-winged Swallow	c		c	u
___ Bank Swallow	u	u	u	
* ___ Cliff Swallow	c	u	u	
* ___ Cave Swallow	u	u	u	
* ___ Barn Swallow	c	c	c	r

FAMILY PARIDAE • Chickadees & Titmice

* ___ Carolina Chickadee	c	c	c	c
* ___ Tufted Titmouse	c	c	c	c

FAMILY SITTIDAE • Nuthatches

___ Red-breasted Nuthatch				r
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FAMILY CETHIIDAE • Creepers

___ Brown Creeper	u		u	u
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FAMILY TROGLODYTIDAE • Wrens

* ___ Carolina Wren	c	c	c	c
___ Bewick's Wren				r
___ House Wren	u		u	u
___ Winter Wren	r		r	r

	<u>Spring</u>	<u>Summer</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>Winter</u>
___ Sedge Wren	r		u	u
___ Marsh Wren	u		u	u
<u>FAMILY REGULIDAE • Kinglets</u>				
___ Golden-crowned Kinglet	u		u	u
___ Ruby-crowned Kinglet	c		c	c
<u>FAMILY SYLVIDAE • Gnatcatchers</u>				
___ Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	f		c	c
<u>FAMILY TURDIDAE • Thrushes</u>				
* ___ Eastern Bluebird	f	f	f	c
___ Swainson's Thrush	u		u	
___ Hermit Thrush	u		u	f
* ___ Wood Thrush	u	u	u	
___ American Robin	c	r	f	c
<u>FAMILY MIMIDAE • Mimic Thrushes</u>				
___ Gray Catbird	f		u	u
* ___ Northern Mockingbird	f	c	f	f
___ Brown Thrasher	u		u	f
<u>FAMILY STURNIDAE • Starlings</u>				
* ___ European Starlin	c	c	c	a
<u>FAMILY MOTACILLIDAE • Pipits</u>				
___ American Pipit	f		f	c
___ Sprague's Pipit	r			r
___ Cedar Waxwing	f		f	f
<u>FAMILY PARULIDAE • Wood Warblers</u>				
___ Blue-winged Warbler	u		u	
___ Tennessee Warbler	f		u	
___ Orange-crowned Warbler	f		f	c
___ Nashville Warbler	u		u	r
* ___ Northern Parula	c	c	f	r
___ Tropical Parula			x	
___ Yellow Warbler	f		u	r
___ Chestnut-sided Warbler	u		u	

	<u>Spring</u>	<u>Summer</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>Winter</u>
___ Magnolia Warbler	u		u	r
___ Yellow-rumped Warbler	c		c	a
___ Black-throated Green Warbler	f		u	r
___ Blackburnian Warbler	u		u	x
* ___ Yellow-throated Warbler	u	u		
___ Pine Warbler	u		u	f
___ Prairie Warbler	r		r	r
___ Palm Warbler	u		u	f
___ Bay-breasted Warbler	u			
___ Blackpoll Warbler	r			
___ Cerulean Warbler	r			
___ Black-and-white Warbler	f	r	f	u
___ American Redstart	u	r	u	r
* ___ Prothonotary Warbler	c	c	u	x
___ Worm-eating Warbler	r			
___ Swainson's Warbler	r	r		
___ Ovenbird	r		r	r
___ Northern Waterthrush	u		u	
___ Louisiana Waterthrush	u	r	u	
___ Kentucky Warbler	u	r	u	
___ Mourning Warbler	r		r	
* ___ Common Yellowthroat	f	u	f	u
___ Hooded Warbler	f	u	u	
___ Wilson's Warbler	u		f	u
___ Canada Warbler	u		u	
___ Yellow-breasted Chat	f		u	

FAMILY THRAUPIDAE • Tanagers

* ___ Summer Tanager	u	u	u	
___ Scarlet Tanager	r			
___ Western Tanager	r			x

FAMILY EMBERIZIDAE • Sparrows

___ Green-tailed Towhee				x
___ Eastern Towhee	r		r	r
___ Spotted Towhee				r
___ Chipping Sparrow	f		c	c
___ Field Sparrow	u			u
___ Vesper Sparrow	u		u	c



	<u>Spring</u>	<u>Summer</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>Winter</u>
___ Lark Sparrow			r	r
___ Lark Bunting			x	
___ Savannah Sparrow	c		c	a
___ Grasshopper Sparrow				r
___ Henslow's Sparrow				u
___ Le Conte's Sparrow				f
___ Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow				x
___ Fox Sparrow				u
___ Song Sparrow	u		f	f
___ Lincoln's Sparrow	f		u	f
___ Swamp Sparrow	f		c	c
___ White-throated Sparrow	c		c	c
___ White-crowned Sparrow	u		f	u
___ Harris's Sparrow				r
___ Dark-eyed Junco	u		u	u
___ Lapland Longspur				r

FAMILY CARDINALIDAE • Cardinals, Grosbeaks & Buntings

* ___ Northern Cardinal	a	a	a	a
___ Pyrrhuloxia				x
___ Rose-breasted Grosbeak	r		r	
___ Black-headed Grosbeak				x
___ Blue Grosbeak	u		r	
* ___ Indigo Bunting	f	f	u	
* ___ Painted Bunting	f	f	u	
* ___ Dickcissel	f	c		

FAMILY ICTERIDAE • Orioles & Blackbirds

___ Bobolink				x
* ___ Red-winged Blackbird	a	c	a	a
* ___ Eastern Meadowlark	c	c	c	c
___ Yellow-headed Blackbird			r	
___ Rusty Blackbird				r
___ Brewer's Blackbird			u	u
___ Common Grackle	c	c	c	c
* ___ Boat-tailed Grackle	f	f	u	u
* ___ Great-tailed Grackle	f	f	u	c
* ___ Brown-headed Cowbird	c	c	a	a
* ___ Orchard Oriole	u	u	f	

	<u>Spring</u>	<u>Summer</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>Winter</u>
___ Streak-backed Oriole	x			x
___ Bullock's Oriole	x			x
___ Baltimore Oriole	u		f	r
<b><u>FAMILY FRINGILLIDAE • Finches</u></b>				
___ Purple Finch			r	r
___ Pine Siskin	u			u
___ American Goldfinch	c		u	c
<b><u>FAMILY PASSERIDAE • Weavers</u></b>				
* ___ House Sparrow	f	f	f	f

**UPPER TEXAS COAST SPECIES  
NOT YET SEEN BUT TO BE EXPECTED**

Whip-poor-will

Gray-cheeked Thrush

Veery

Golden-winged Warbler

## CITATION

Godley, Bill and David Heinicke. 2006. *Birds of Brazos Bend State Park: A Field Checklist*. Natural Resource Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

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In 1983, the Texas Legislature created the Special Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Fund. This fund may be used for nongame wildlife and endangered species research and conservation, habitat acquisition and development and dissemination of information pertaining to nongame management. Money for this fund is obtained through private donations and sale of nongame wildlife art prints and stamps. This fund now gives Texans a unique opportunity to help support this state's valuable and sensitive nongame resources. Your individual contributions and purchases of nongame art prints and stamps will help determine the level of nongame conservation activities in Texas. For more information call toll-free (1-800-792-1112) or contact: **Nongame and Endangered Species Program, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, 4200 Smith School Road, Austin, Texas 78744.**

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Natural Resources Program  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
4200 Smith School Road  
Austin, Texas 78744