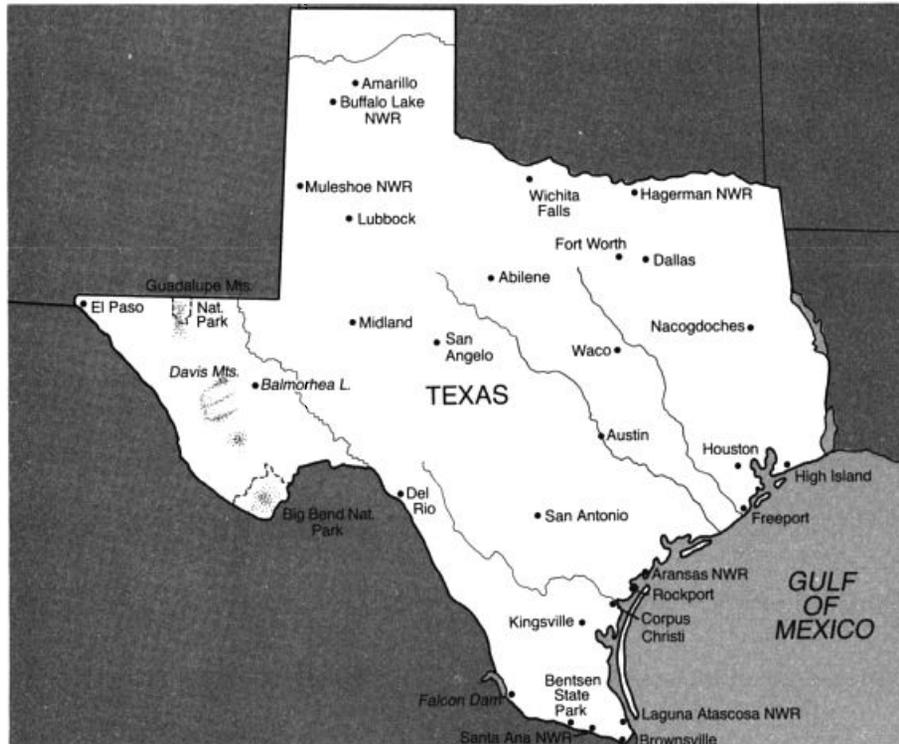


# texas region



**GREG W. LASLEY, CHUCK SEXTON,  
MARK LOCKWOOD,  
and WILLIE SEKULA**

Could it be as simple as “El Niño”? This handy, overused explanation will probably suffice for the mild and wet winter across much of the state, and the many lingering migrants and unusual over-wintering species. But this brings with it the desire to search beyond the gross patterns. We claim no great insight into the finer-scale patterns evinced by the collection of sightings reported here. How does one explain the simultaneous absence of Cedar Waxwings and yet a rather normal abundance of American Robins, their normal consort in berry-eating crimes? Why did Red-breasted Nuthatches invade in a mild winter, while siskins and other winter finches were sparse? Is random chance, overlaid on “normal” migration patterns and winter distributions, sufficient to explain the (long) list of wintering warblers in south Texas? And then there are those sparrow patterns, which just defy Regional explanation.

West Texas began with sufficient mois-

ture, but after the end of December it headed into a sustained dry and windy pattern. The eastward shifts of such species as Lark Bunting and Pyrrhuloxia started in the earlier portion of the season, and thus the later drought conditions can't explain that. Most all other areas had sufficient to abundant moisture through the season. The mild conditions in the north half of the state may explain the diversity and abundance of raptors turned up in several road-cruising reports. Yet the case of the lone magpie which strayed into the northern Panhandle reopens the eternal question of whether conditions in the breeding range are “at fault” (either too good or too bad), or whether conditions in Texas were just that attractive. We seem to have more questions than answers this season, El Niño or not.

This season, Professor Paul C. Palmer offers his last contribution of compiling information in south Texas for us. Finding himself entirely too busy now that he has retired from the academic world, Paul deserves the time to devote to his many interests. In his sub-regional reports to us over the years, the sheer volume of data and

analyses offered up by Paul have given us an archive of uncommon ornithological wealth. We are pleased that Mel Cooksey, who dazzles us with a particularly unusual and entertaining contribution this season (see Addendum, below), has agreed to take over the compilation of our south Texas material.

**Abbreviations:** G.M.N.P. (*Guadalupe Mountains Nat'l Park*); L.R.G.V. (*Lower Rio Grande Valley*); S.S.W.T.P. (*South Side Water Treatment Plant, Dallas*); T.B.R.C. (*Texas Bird Records Committee/Texas Ornithological Society*); U.T.C. (*Upper Texas Coast*); V.C.D.B. (*Village Creek Drying Beds, Tarrant Co.*). The following are shortened names for the respective county, state, or national parks, wildlife refuges, etc.: Anahuac, Anzalduas, Aransas, Attwater, Bentsen, Big Bend, Buffalo Lake, Guadalupe Delta, Hagerman, Laguna Atascosa, McKinney Falls, Sabal Palms, San Bernard, and Santa Ana.

## LOONS TO STORK

A single Red-throated Loon was documented at L. Tawakoni, *Rains*, Jan. 1 and probably stayed the winter (†RR et al). Also at Tawakoni, two Pacific Loons from the fall remained into early December (MWh, TPo). Other e. Texas Pacifics were noted in early January at L. Murvaul, *Panola*, and L. O' The Pines, *Marion* (m.ob.). One of the Pacific Loons at Greenbelt L., *Donley*, remained until Dec. 18 (KS). A Least Grebe at Burnet Jan. 2 was unexpected (KMc). Photos were obtained of a Red-necked Grebe at L. Ray Roberts, *Cooke*, Dec. 28 (BFR), providing a 3rd n.c. Texas record. A single Neotropical Cormorant was found at L. Tawakoni Jan. 4 (*vide* RK), and perhaps the same bird was noted again Feb. 21 (MWh, CCL). A rare wintering Anhinga was at Kurth L., *Angelina*, all season (LD et al.). Other inland Anhingas included two at College Station Feb. 18 (*vide* BeF) and a single bird at Waco Feb. 28 (FB, EGW). An unexpected early migrant flock of 120 Anhingas was over Santa Ana Feb. 23 (CS). A Reddish Egret was noted at Imperial Res., *Pecos*, Feb. 15 (BJP). Wintering Black-crowned Night-Herons in n. Texas provided a sign of the mildness of the season: Up to 19 birds were reported in 4 counties (*Potter, Randall, Wichita, and Archer*) at various times. A single



**Despite many reports, genuine winter Swainson's Hawks are generally quite rare anywhere north of South America. This immature was documented in Cameron County, Texas, on January 15, 1998. Photograph/ Jim Culbertson**

Glossy Ibis was found at Anahuac Feb. 27 (SML). White-faced Ibises also lingered in w. Texas; six were at L. Balmorhea Dec. 19 (TJ) and four were in *El Paso* Jan. 17–25 (JSp). Two Wood Storks in *Cameron* Dec. 28 provided another unusual wintering record (*fide* JL).

#### **WATERFOWL**

A group of up to ten Fulvous Whistling-Ducks was out of place at Imperial Res. Dec. 19–Jan. 8 (BJP). Unexpected in the Hill Country in winter were 62 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks at Boerne, *Kendall*, Jan. 3 (GSc). There were three single Tundra Swans in *Cameron*, *Tarrant*, and *Val Verde* in December and January, and Eubanks reported a flock of 10 Tundras overhead in *Liberty* Jan. 26. A controversial imm. swan variously identified as a Tundra or Trumpeter was at Merkel, *Taylor*, from early December to early March (m.ob.); documentation will be reviewed by the T.B.R.C. Correlating with the species' dramatic increase on the breeding grounds, numbers of Ross's Geese went through the ceiling. Record area counts included 127 at Hagerman Dec. 27 (*fide* WM); 170 at McNary Res., *Hudspeth*, all season (BZ, JPa); and 10 in e. *Hidalgo* Feb. 19 (GL, SB, LM). Most amazing were over 1000 Ross's seen in *Colorado* Jan. 18 (ML, BFr). A single Muscovy Duck thought to be a wild individual was reported at Santa Ana in February (TxB). A couple of wintering Cinnamon Teals at V.C.D.B. were unusual for n. Texas.

Up to eight Greater Scaups in Amarillo, *Randall*, were seen regularly Jan. 4 to the end of the period (BiMc, m.ob.), a species seldom recorded in the Panhandle. Greater were also reported at 4 locations in n.c.

Texas (m.ob.), suggesting a more widespread distribution this winter. At least 17 Oldsquaws exceeds any previous winter tally; they were scattered all across the state. Most notable was a group of five at Riviera Beach, *Kleberg*, Jan. 11 through the period (BoH, m.ob.), and a single bird on the Rio Grande at Santa Margarita Ranch, *Starr*, Jan. 1 (CBe). Small numbers of Black and White-winged scoters were reported off the U.T.C. periodically, but the only inland scoters were single White-wingeds at Mitchell L. in San Antonio Jan. 16–17 (BDo) and at Imperial Res. Dec. 18 (BJP). A single male Masked Duck was near Sugarland, *Fort Bend*, from Feb. 23 into March (ph., m.ob.).

#### **RAPTORS**

An Osprey at Midland Dec. 20 (GKe, TPot) and one at McNary Res. Feb. 7 (JPa) provided rare winter records. Ospreys were more numerous than usual in n.c. Texas with single birds at 3 locations during the period. Bald Eagles were found in above-average numbers in the c. Trans-Pecos (KB, JKa). A sub-ad. N. Goshawk was present at Buffalo Lake from Dec. 27 to Jan. 6 (†KS et al.). The N. Goshawk mentioned from *Smith* in the fall was seen sporadically through Feb. 13 (TPo, PHa et al.). Following the trend noted in previous years, a single Harris's Hawk was in *Lubbock* Feb. 11 (GJ). Out of season was a Red-shouldered Hawk in *Floyd* Jan. 10 (TFer). An imm. Swainson's Hawk was photographed Jan. 15 near Santa Rosa, *Cameron* (J&PC); this provided one of the very few well-documented winter records for the state. Single Zone-tailed Hawks were noted at San Antonio Dec. 21 (SHa) and Jan. 16 (GSc), and

another was found near Del Rio Dec. 28 (*fide* GSc). A "Harlan's" Red-tailed Hawk returned to Balmorhea for a 2nd winter (KB, TG). Remarkable were two Rough-legged Hawks and two Golden Eagles found at Freeport Dec. 21 (FC). A Peregrine Falcon was unexpected at L. Amistad, *Val Verde*, Jan. 23 (E&SWie).

#### **QUAIL TO SHOREBIRDS**

As is often the case after a wet summer, Scaled Quail populations were very high throughout the c. Trans-Pecos. Large coveys were noted at higher elevations than normal, including birds in the pine forests in the Davis Mts. (*fide* KB). An unusual concentration of 400 Sandhill Cranes at L. Balmorhea Dec. 20 was unexpected (BWi). The peak count of Whooping Cranes at Aransas this season was 181. A single ad. Whooper was present with Sandhills in *Lynn* Dec. 11–13 (*fide* JH). A juv. Whooper was present near San Bernard N.W.R. Jan. 22–24, bringing the total population count to 182 (*fide* TS).

Three Snowy Plovers wintered at Imperial Res., providing one of the few winter records for the Region (BJP et al.). A Semipalmated Plover at Austin's Hornsby Bend Dec. 20 provided a first winter record for the area (BFr). Mountain Plovers were present all period near Granger, *Williamson*, with a high count of 117 Jan. 19 (TFe). Small numbers of Black-necked Stilts and Am. Avocets remained in early January at scattered location in the Trans-Pecos. An Am. Avocet, perhaps an early migrant, was in *Gray* Feb. 1 (J&VT). Illustrating the importance of the shorebird sanctuary at Bolivar Flats was an estimated 14,000 Am. Avocets there Feb. 27 (SML). Unusual in n.c. Texas, lingering W. Sandpipers were noted among the usual contingent of Least Sandpipers at L. Tawakoni, *Rains*, until Dec. 15 (ph. MWh) and at Lewisville, *Denton*, until Feb. 16 (MG, LHa). Wintering Dunlin were found at various locations from Midland westward to El Paso. Most notable was one at Big Bend Dec. 29 (KSt), providing the first park record. A single Stilt Sandpiper in Midland Feb. 28 provided a rare winter record (*fide* FW), as did a Wilson's Phalarope in Austin Dec. 20 (BFr).

#### **JAEGERS THROUGH TERNS**

Gusty onshore winds provided excellent conditions to observe jaegers from shore Feb. 27. At least 15 Pomarines were observed following shrimp boats along Bolivar Pen. (SML et al.). Two reports of single imm. Laughing Gulls from n.c. Texas, one

at Dallas Dec. 25–31 (KN, MG) and another in *Grayson* Feb. 18–26 (LL, WM), added to the evolving pattern of distribution of this species. Rare for n.c. Texas, a late Franklin's Gull was at Mountain Creek L. Dec. 25 (KN). Another was at V.C.B.D. Jan. 25 (LH), while surprisingly three spent the winter at L. Lewisville (ph., MG, LHa). An ad. Little Gull apparently traded places with the first-winter bird which had been at Mountain Creek L. in late November; the adult was documented as late as Dec. 7 (†RR, BGi).

The Black-headed Gull from Cooper L. mentioned in the fall report remained until Feb. 14 (ph., M&KWh, CCo, MDi). Another Black-headed Gull at V.C.D.B. Jan. 24 through the period provided a 2nd *Tarrant* record (†JMcH, ph., m.ob.). A first-winter Mew Gull was photographed in *El Paso* Jan. 21, providing the first county record (BZ). Another Mew Gull was reported at Galveston Feb. 23 through the period (ph., PDH et al.); both will be reviewed by the T.B.R.C. Becoming somewhat regular in the El Paso area, single ad. California Gulls were found in *El Paso* Jan. 19–24 and McNary Res. Jan. 22 (ph., †BZ). Details on single California Gulls were also provided from L. Tawakoni, Galveston, and Corpus Christi. A Thayer's Gull was present at Corpus Christi Jan. 23 to at least Feb. 24 (†WS, MC, ph., CS). Another Thayer's was at Galveston Dec. 31 and Feb. 23 († ph., PDH). At least 15 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were reported from coastal locations during the period. A dark-backed gull at *Galveston* was variously described as a Western or Great Black-backed Gull. All slides examined to date by these editors suggest Great Black-backed. Single Glaucous Gulls were found at 5 coastal locations. Interesting inland Black-legged Kittiwakes included one at Midland Dec. 16–19 († ph., MC, J&DMe) and another in *Hudspeth* Dec. 21 († BZ).

Essentially unknown in North America in winter, we suspect that a Least Tern photographed on Galveston's East Beach Feb. 25 was a migrant some 2 to 3 weeks earlier than expected (ph., JD, ST).

#### DOVES TO NIGHTJARS

Continuing the trend of previous seasons, Eur. Collared-Doves were reported from Canyon, Austin, El Paso, San Angelo, and Galveston. Thirty-seven were noted from the latter location Jan. 17 (ph., ML). Up to six were at Calallen, near Corpus Christi, from Feb. 14 onward. The individual reported at San Angelo in fall remained into December (DT, TM et al.). A single bird

was photographed in El Paso Feb. 18–20 (BZ), providing the first Trans-Pecos record. Continuing their spread northward, White-winged Doves appear established in the Amarillo area (*fide* KS); another was in *Swisher* Dec. 27 (JRe). Another sign of the mild winter, a group of 14 Burrowing Owls was found in Amarillo Jan. 11 (RSc). A Long-eared Owl was at L. Grapevine, *Denton*, Jan. 4–10 (LHa), providing a rare n.c. Texas record. Possibly resident but seldom noted in winter, a N. Saw-whet Owl was tape recorded Jan. 9 in G.M.N.P. (DW). A Chuck-will's-widow was found at Sabine Woods Dec. 14 & 16 (TE, KStra), providing one of very few winter records. Another interesting winter caprimulgid was a Whip-poor-will at Corpus Christi Dec. 20 (WS).



**Eurasian Collared-Doves continue to crop up in various parts of Texas, probably harbingers of even more to come. This bird, the first for far western Texas, was in El Paso on February 19, 1998. Photograph/Barry Zimmer**

#### HUMMINGBIRDS TO WOODPECKERS

Corpus Christi's **Green-breasted Mango** from the fall report remained until at least Dec. 21 (*fide* MC). Three Anna's Hummingbirds were documented in El Paso Jan. 3 & 8 (DO, BZ et al.). Another male Anna's persisted until at least Feb. 8 in the Davis Mts. (KB). Single Calliope and Broad-tailed hummingbirds lingered at El Paso into early January (BZ). Wintering Rufous Hummingbirds were scattered from El Paso, Austin, and Nacogdoches southward. The apparent ad. male Allen's Hummingbird spent its 3rd winter at San Antonio (HW). A Golden-fronted Woodpecker wintered in

*Oldham*, w. of its normal range (KS). On Feb. 10, hurricane-force winds passed through parts of e. Texas, damaging Red-cockaded Woodpecker habitat. In some areas, all or most of the cavity trees were damaged; however, the storm struck during the day, while the birds were not at the roosts, so biologists believe that most of the woodpeckers survived the storm (*fide* RiS). Many observers commented that N. Flickers appeared in below-average numbers.

#### FLYCATCHERS TO SWALLOWS

A late migrant *Empidonax* flycatcher was in Canyon Dec. 2 (PT). A Gray Flycatcher was found Feb. 19 through the period in *Karnes* (DMu); the species had wintered in that county in the early 1990s. Along with at least five Ash-throated Flycatchers at San Bernard in December, one or two Brown-crested wintered Dec. 19 through the period (ph., RWe); the species is accidental on the U.T.C. in winter. Another rare U.T.C. report was of a Great Kiskadee in *Harris* Feb. 10–14 (PDH). Very substantial numbers of Couch's Kingbirds wintered as far north as *Goliad* and *Victoria*. Also of note were two Couch's in San Antonio Dec. 21 (E&SWie) and up to three in *Fort Bend* from Dec. 6 onward. At least one *Fort Bend* Couch's remained into January (m.ob.). A Cassin's Kingbird at Rio Grande Village in Big Bend Dec. 31 was unexpected (BH).

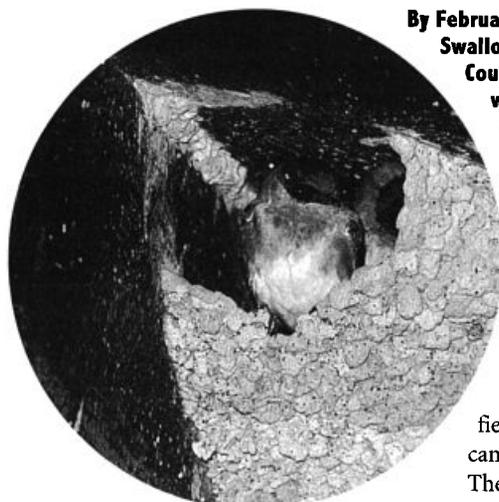
Small numbers of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers wintered in s. Texas, but the species was more noteworthy in far north Texas: A single Scissor-tailed lingered in *Denton* until Dec. 3 (RR), and another was in *Grayson* Dec. 21 (RR, BGi). However, most intriguing was the discovery of a night-time roost of Scissor-taileds in urban Flower Mound, *Denton*, from early December until mid-February. Thirteen birds were counted Dec. 27 but by early January the numbers had swelled to 17 birds. This is an unprecedented event for the northern half of the state.

Purple Martins arrived about a week early in c. and n. Texas; they appeared in Austin Jan. 11 (RA), Waco Jan. 15 (EGW), and in *Johnson* Jan. 21 (CE). Cave Swallows were already building nests Feb. 19–20 in s. *Kenedy* (ph., GL). A Barn Swallow in Midland Feb. 22 was a bit early for that region (GKe).

#### JAYS TO SHRIKES

This winter, in a non-invasion year, a Steller's Jay in the upper valley of El Paso Jan. 8 was a significant find (BZ). A single Blue Jay continued to be reported in

By February 20, 1998, the Cave Swallows in southern Kenedy County, Texas, were already working on nests. In this case, they may have been refurbishing an old Cliff Swallow nest. Photograph/Greg W. Lasley



Edinburg (TB), and two more were in Mission Feb. 13 (fide JI), well to the south of their normal range. A terrific discovery was a **Black-billed Magpie** in Hansford Dec. 5 († D&MT); the bird was observed again in the same location Jan. 15 († DE, JWin). If accepted, this will be only the 3rd Texas record despite many undocumented reports. As we reported in the fall, Tamulipas Crows were virtually unfindable at the Brownsville landfill. The birds are few in number and access to the site is much more strictly controlled than in past years.

The single Carolina Chickadee at the s. tip of Texas at Sabal Palms remained through February (m.ob.). Another Carolina Chickadee was a bit w. of its normal range in *Dickens* Feb. 8 (GJ). The invasion of Red-breasted Nuthatches which began in the fall positioned birds all over the state; along with the localities mentioned that season, add a single bird at Anzalduas in January and February (R&LG). Three Cactus Wrens in *Oldham* mentioned in the fall column lingered to Dec. 1 (KS). A House Wren thought to be of the "Brown-throated" subspecies group was described at Santa Ana Feb. 8 († PDH); this form had been previously reported only from w. Texas. A calling Sedge Wren was a great find in the Panhandle at the Taylor Lakes W.M.A., *Donley*, Dec. 18 (KS).

Although the species are expected to undergo large fluctuations in abundance from one winter to the next, the almost total absence in w. Texas and the Panhandle of all 3 bluebird species and Townsend's Solitaires was nonetheless very noteworthy (m.ob.). Only a single E. Bluebird was noted in the Trans-Pecos for the entire winter; it was at McNary Dec. 21 (JPa). Up to three Clay-colored Robins were reported at Bentsen (and documented well for a

change), and one-two more were reported at Santa Ana Dec. 16 onward († m.ob.). More notable was a Clay-colored in Corpus Christi Dec. 4-Jan. 11 (ph., †A&MC, E&NA).

A **White-throated Robin** was identified by Kittleman Feb. 6 at Bentsen after a camper had watched it since about Feb. 1. The announcement of this bird on rare bird alerts brought a mass of observers, resulting in excellent documentation on this 2nd Texas and North American record. The first robin was joined by a second individual Feb. 10. Other than a 6-day hiatus when they made themselves scarce Feb. 21-26, the birds were relatively conspicuous well into March.

We received 2 different, well-described reports of **Rufous-backed Robin**, one at Santa Ana Jan. 14 (S&BMA, JHig) and one at Bentsen Jan. 20 (MO, B&MaC). These are well e. of the previous 4 Texas records, the easternmost of which was at Falcon Dam in 1975. Of interest was a Gray Catbird noted in Waco Jan. 1 (FB, JMu), a bit n. of where they are expected in winter, but more surprising was another catbird in *Swisher* in the Panhandle Dec. 25 through the period (JRe). A wandering Crissal Thrasher was unexpected at over 5000 ft. in the Davis Mts. Dec. 8-10 (D&LH). A lot of observers commented on the abundance of Sprague's Pipits in s. Texas. For example, a field at Anzalduas hosted up to 35 Sprague's in late February (m.ob.). It was clearly not an invasion year, nor even a normal year of abundance, for Cedar Waxwings. A Phainopepla at a private ranch in s. *Kenedy* in mid-January was a good find for s. Texas (fide MBu).

#### VIROES AND WARBLERS

Rio Grande Village hosted a White-eyed Vireo Jan. 30 (MF), one of few winter records for Big Bend. We're still seeking resolution of the detailed distribution of the Solitary Vireo complex in migration and winter in Texas. Blue-headed winters in the e. half of the state, w. for example as far as Midland, and casually farther west. This season we had reports of Cassin's in widespread areas from the L.R.G.V. up the coast all the way to *Jefferson* and inland to

Austin. Not all of these were firmly identified, but certainly some must have been valid. We had no solid reports of Plumbeous this winter; we expect Plumbeous only to winter casually in the Trans-Pecos. The identification difficulties of this complex are only beginning to be appreciated; an excellent starting point is Matt Heindel's article in *Birding* Vol. 28:458-471 (December 1996). Sight reports of late lingering and unexpected vireos included a Yellow-throated Dec. 21 at Freeport and a Philadelphia at Port Aransas Dec. 22. A returning Hutton's Vireo was seen in El Paso Jan. 29 (BZ) where the species is accidental; the species was conspicuously absent in the Davis Mts., where it is normally a conspicuous component of mixed flocks (KB).

A Nashville Warbler in McKinney Falls near Austin Dec. 14 was a rare early winter find (ML), as was a N. Parula at Sabal Palms Dec. 22 (BMc); the latter was said to have wintered. A male Yellow Warbler wintered at Rancho Viejo, *Cameron* (BMc). Black-throated Grays wintered in small numbers, as expected, along the entire Rio Grande corridor, but single birds in *Bastrop* Jan. 11 (BFr) and another in *Live Oak* Jan. 1 (JHol) were notable. A rarity indeed was a Townsend's Warbler near Dumas, *Moore*, Dec. 4-5 (CaS). A first *Hudspeth* winter record was provided by a Black-throated Green at Ft. Hancock Dec. 21 (BZ, JPa). Four Black-throated Green Warblers in the Guadalupe Delta Jan. 21 (A&MC) were a notable concentration.

A Blackburnian Warbler was reported at Rancho Viejo in the L.R.G.V. in mid-February (KE). A Yellow-throated Warbler was very unusual for inland Texas Feb. 13 in Burnet (KMc). This was definitely a "Pine Warbler Winter," with good numbers staging an incursion deep into s. Texas and many noted in the w. part of n. Texas, such as in *Cooke*, *Denton*, and *Grayson*. Two Prairie Warblers were in Kingsville Dec. 21 (fide SSm); the species is only known to winter regularly on the U.T.C. Notable for e. Texas was a Palm Warbler Jan. 1-4 at L. Murvaul, *Panola* (DBro et al.). Other interesting inland warblers included single Ovenbirds in Midland Jan. 10 (GG, CG) and in El Paso Jan. 25 (JPa). There was a report on the Corpus Christi Rare Bird Alert, apparently without details, of a MacGillivray's Warbler at Goose I. Dec. 6, but this would be only about the 3rd winter record for Texas. Although not a Review species for the state, this is the kind of sighting which deserves good documentation. Another extremely rare wintering warbler is

the Hooded; a single male wintered at Sabal Palms (AW, BMC et al.). A single Rufous-capped Warbler found on the Comstock CBC Dec. 27 was relocated periodically through the season in its isolated location (ChW et al., ph., WS); this will represent the 12th Texas record of the species.

#### GROSBEAKS TO FINCHES

Pyrrhuloxias wandered beyond their normal range during the season. Seven or more could be found in Canyon, *Randall* (m.ob.); a single bird was in *Throckmorton* during February (LHa); and the species was noted routinely in the Austin area from mid-December onward (CS, m.ob.). A pair of Blue Buntings appeared at Bentsen Nov. 28 (m.ob.). By mid-February there were at least four individuals present, two ad. males, one imm. male, and one ad. female (†, ph. m.ob.). Another male was reported from Salineño, *Starr*, Feb. 7 (†PDH).

Six Green-tailed Towhees at Midland Feb. 7 (RMS, JAd) were of note. Northwest of their expected range, Canyon Towhees wintered in *Oldham* (KS). White-collared Seedeaters are being reported more regularly and in slightly increasing numbers. For example, up to nine were reported at Zapata through the period (m.ob.) and three or more at Chapéño Jan. 13 (MO). A Cassin's Sparrow was a little e. at Attwater Jan. 2 (JHy). Cassin's Sparrows were more conspicuous around the Davis Mts. than in the previous several years (KB). Unexpected was a Rufous-crowned Sparrow at Monument Hill, *Fayette*, Jan. 1 (ML, BFr). Far north of its normal wintering range, a Clay-colored Sparrow was at Texline Jan. 7 (†MR). After the previous winter's abundance, Brewer's Sparrows were virtually absent from the Trans-Pecos for most of the period.

Lark Buntings made a strong appearance in *Wichita* and *Archer* (MDi). They were noted as far east as *Grayson* Jan. 27 (KH, LL, et al.) for an apparent first county record, and were found on CBCs as far southeast as *Colorado* and *Fort Bend*. Grasshopper and Le Conte's sparrows were particularly abundant in c. Texas southward to the c. coast (CS, BFr, ML). A Henslow's Sparrow was located at Cooper L., *Delta*, Dec. 18, providing a first area record (MWh). Fox Sparrows were noted in w. parts of the state, with reports from up to 7 localities in the Panhandle, Davis Mts., and El Paso (m.ob.). South of the species' normal range, Harris's Sparrows were located in the Corpus Christi area Dec. 20 (*fide* GS) and Jan. 19 (A&MC). McCown's and Lap-

land longspurs were much more common than normal in the Panhandle and South Plains this season, replacing the usually more common Chestnut-collared (KS, ML).

Yellow-headed Blackbirds made rare winter appearances in *Donley* Jan. 4–Feb. 20 (m.ob.) and *Burnet* Feb. 11 (KMc). Three Rusty Blackbirds were unexpected in *Hutchinson* Dec. 28 (MPa), as was a night roost of over 300 in *Hunt* during late February (MWh).

Unlike last winter, Red Crossbills were reported only in 3 widely scattered areas: A single bird was seen Dec. 19 in G.M.N.P. in w. Texas (RG), and on the same date four were w. of Lufkin, *Angelina*, in the forests of e. Texas (TxB). Another single crossbill was in *Floyd* in the s. Panhandle during January and February (TFer). Pine Siskins were reportedly scarce statewide. Several Lesser Goldfinches were seen in Canyon, *Randall*, Feb. 14. These individuals were green-backed, indicating they were first-winter males of the *psaltria* subspecies, the only form yet documented for the state.

#### ADDENDUM

Before we append our traditional list of undocumented rarities, we are happy to point out a champion story of the opposite kind. While birding at Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park on Dec. 9, 1994, Mel and Arlie Cooksey documented a bird that turned out, on later examination, to be a **Stygian Owl**. The photos and notes have been forwarded to the T.B.R.C.; this record will likely supplant the December 1996 Bentsen bird (*Field Notes* 51:950–952, Winter 1997) as the first for Texas and North America. See the full details published as a lead article in this issue.

#### UNDOCUMENTED RARITIES

In addition to the documented records listed above, we received the following reports of Texas Review Species with insufficient or no documentation: Red-throated Loon (L. Texoma), Masked Duck (Santa Ana), California Gull (3 coastal locations), Iceland Gull (Galveston), and Baird's Sparrow (*Hidalgo*).

**Cited observers (subregional editors in boldface):** John Adams (JAd), Mark Adams (MAd), Mary Lou Alcorn, Lynn Aldrich, Robin Alexander, Dick Anderson (DAN), Nina & Eddie Arnold, Art Artega, Donna Artega, John Arvin, Mike Austin, Tom Baker, Jon Barlow, Keith Bartels (KBa), Bill & Patty Beasley (B&PBe), Giff Beaton,

Chris Benesh (CBe), Steve Bentsen, Gordon Berkey, Nancy Bird, Hazel Bluhm, Bill Bourbon (BBo), **David Bradford** (UTC 18046 Green Hazel, Houston, TX 77084 email: brdfrd@tenet.edu), Craig & Karen Braginton, Elizabeth Brooks, David & Luanne Brotherton (D&LBro), Tim Brush, **Kelly Bryan** (Trans-Pecos: P.O. Box 786, Ft Davis, TX 79734. email: kellyb@nexus.utexas.edu), Frank Bumgardner, Monica Burdette (MBu), Taylor Carlisle, Oscar Carmona, Charlie Clark, Scott Clark, Fred Collins, Bruce & Mary Collins (B&MaC), Arlie & Mel Cooksey, Tim Cooper, Cameron Cox (CCo), Mark Cranford (MCr), Jim & Pat Culbertson, John Dale, Isabel Davis, Michelle Davis, Walt Davis, Louis Debetaz, Mike Dillon (MDi), Bob Doe (BDo), Andrew Donnelly, Charles Easley, Mark & Mary Ann Eastman, Kim Eckert, Carol Edwards (CEd), Chuck Ely (CEl), Victor Emanuel, Doug Emkalns, Pansy Espey, Ted Eubanks, Doug Faulkner (DFa), Tim Fennel (TFe), Terry Ferguson (TFer), Bob Fisher, Dean Fisher, Mark Flippo, Jane Fowler, Tony & Phyllis Frank, Brush Freeman (BFr), Bert Frenz (BeF), Gil Fry, Leo Galloway, Tony Gallucci, Red & Louise Gambill, Dawn Garcia, Murray Gardler, Hugh Garnett, Corbett Gauden, John Gee (JGe), Brian Gibbons (BGi), Jack Giltinan, Peter Gottschling, Bill Graber, Russell Graham, Gene Grimes, Ron Gutberlet (RGu), Jim Hailey (JiH), Brian Hale, Laurens Halsey (LHa), James Hamous, Marty Hanson, Peggy Harding (PHa), Ceclia Harris, Bob Harrison (BoH), Pat Hartigan (PHart), Dale Hartsfield (DHa), Jill Haukos, Steve Hawkins (SHa), Tom Hays, David & Linda Hedges (D&LH), Jim Henderson (JHe), John Higgins (JHig), Petra Hockey, Joan Holt (JHol), Sallie Homan, Dorothy Hudson, P.D. Hulce, Jeremy Hyman (JHy), Joe Ideker, Hugh Jameson, Bob Johnson, Tom Johnson, Thomas L. Johnson (TLJ), Greg Joiner, Judith Jones, Larry Jordan, John Karges (JKa), Tim Kaspar, Greg Keiran, Donna Kelly, Gary Kelly (GKe), Richard Kinney, John Kiseda (JoK), Jane Kittleman, Ed Kutac, Wesley Lanyon, Greg Lasley, Bruce & Merle Lawson, Debra Lee, Lee Lemmons, Cathy Liles, Mark Lockwood, Guy & Joan Luneau (G&JLu), Halsey Marsden, Julia Marsden, Simone & Blaine Marter (S&BMa), Terry Maxwell, Karen McBride (KMc), Eve McCullough, Jim McHanney (JMCh), Debra McKee, Bill McKinney (BiMc), Brad McKinney (BMc), Joann & Don Merritt (J&DMe), Wayne Meyer, Bob Miles, Paul Miliotis, Steve Mlodinow (SMl), Carroll Moore (CMo),

Laura Moore, John Muldrow (JMu), Derek Muschalek (DMu), Ken Nanney, Carole & Craig Nunn, David Ogle, Dale Ohl (DOh), Alfred Olivas, Mike Overton, Dorothy & Adrian Owens, Nancy & **Paul Palmer** (South Texas: 615 South Wanda, Kingsville, TX 78363. email: kfpcp00@tamuk.edu), Jim Paton (JPa), Michael Patten (MPa), Royce Pendergast, Marcos Peredes, Dick Pike, Tom Pincelli, Tom & Gail Poth (T&GPot), Barbara Jean Potthast (BJP), Truman Powell (TPo), Ann Proske, Brian & Joann Pruitt, Arvino Punjabi, Ross Rasmussen, Joel Reese (JRe), Martin Reid, John & Barbara Ribble (J&BRi), Jan & Will Risser (J&WRi), Cindy Rodriguez, Phil Rostrom, Sid & Shirley Rucker, Joe & Paula Russo, Bill Sain, Paul Saraceni, Laura Sare, David Sarkozi, Rick Schaefer (RiS), Susie Schneider, Georgina Schwarz (GSc), Rosemary Scott (RSc), **Willie Sekula** (Central Texas: Rt. 1, Box 130, Falls City, TX 78113. email: WSekula@aol.com), Chuck Sexton, **Ken Seyffert** (Panhandle: 2206 S. Lipscomb, Amarillo, TX 79109), **Cliff Shackelford** (CSh) (East Texas: Texas Partners In Flight, 4200 Smith School Rd., Austin, TX 78744. email: clifford.shackelford@tpwd.state.tx.us), J. W. Sifford, Joel & Vicki Simon (J&VSi), Steven Smith (SSm), John Sproul, Sara St. Clair, Carolyn Stallwitz (CaS), Tom Stehn, Jim Stevenson (JSt), Ken Stinnett (KSt), Rose Marie Stortz, Ken Stransky (KSt), Paul Sunby (PSu), Glenn Swartz, Sue Tackett, Delbert Tarter, Jay & Verna Teague (J&VTe), TexBirds (TxB/Nat. Audubon Society discussion group about Texas birds online), David & Marian Tomlinson, Peggy Trosper, Mary Tryer, Linda Walsh, Jim Walz, Ro Wauer, Chad Wayne, Ron Weeks (RWe), Herbert Wessling (HWe), Bill & Mickey West, Marsha Wheatley (MWhe), Kristin & **Matt White** (N.C. Texas: 2518 Monroe, Commerce, TX 75428. email: mwhite@sulphur-springs.isd.tenet.edu), E. G. White-Swift (EGW), John Whittle (JWh), Clarence Wiedenfeld, Charlie Wiedenfeld (ChW), Egon & Sue Wiedenfeld (E&SWie), Frances Williams, Harry Wilson, Scott Wilson, Jan Wimberley (JWim), Anse Windham, Jack Windsor (JWin), David & Mimi Wolf, Alan Wormington, Jimmy Zabriskie, Barry Zimmer.

**Greg W. Lasley**, 305 Loganberry Ct., Austin, TX 78745-6527 (glasley@onr.com), and **Chuck Sexton**, 101 E. 54th St., Austin, TX 78751-1232. (cwsxton@onr.com)



# idaho-western montana region



## DAVE TROCHLELL and DAN SVINGEN

The Region's mild fall weather continued through winter. Snowfall was relatively light, and temperatures were above normal. There were numerous surprising finds of semi-hardy species. Unseasonably warm weather, abundant food, and open water encouraged waterfowl, American Robins, and Varied Thrushes to linger in record numbers throughout the Region. Winter finches were scarce, with the notable exception of Common Redpolls and crossbills.

Spring arrived two to four weeks early. By early February, winter feeding flocks began to break up, spring migrants began to arrive, and early nesters began courtship.

**Abbreviations:** A.F.R. (American Falls Res., Bingham Co., ID); D.F.N.W.R. (Deer Flat Nat'l Wildlife Ref., Canyon Co., ID); F.B.W.M.A. (Fort Boise Wildlife Management Area, Canyon Co.,

ID); H.W.M.A.. (Hagerman Wildlife Management Area, Gooding Co., ID); Latilong (area encompassed by one degree latitude and one degree longitude, used in mapping bird distribution in both Idaho and Montana).

## LOONS TO DUCKS

A Pacific Loon at C.J. Strike Res., Owyhee, ID, on the Bruneau CBC Dec. 21 was rare, but not unprecedented (DHa, RLR). Approximately 20 Com. Loons were reported throughout Idaho during the season (m.ob.), higher than normal. Nine lingering W. Grebes at Cascade Res., Valley, ID, Dec. 10 provided a winter first for Latilong 11 (RM). Two late **Clark's Grebes** spotted on the Bruneau, ID, CBC Dec. 21 represented a first seasonal record for Latilong 24, and only the 2nd winter sighting in Idaho (DHa, RLR). Seasonally rare Am. White Pelicans in Idaho included three on the Bruneau CBC Dec. 21 (JD), two at A.F.R. Dec. 21 (CT), and three that wintered near Buhl (m.ob.).