

was noted in *Oklahoma* Dec. 16; another lingered in *Tulsa*, OK Dec. 8 and survived until at least Jan. 30 after several cold fronts had passed through the area (JWA).

A Savannah Sparrow Feb. 3 in *Jefferson*, KS (MM, GP) was resting fate.

A Swamp Sparrow Jan. 25 in *Scotts Bluff*, w. NE (LKM) was almost unprecedented for both date and location; there is only one other winter record for w. Nebraska (*vide* WRS). White-throated Sparrows wintered n. to Gibbon, NE (LR, RH). Snow Buntings were reported s. to *Lancaster*, NE, where one–two were noted from Jan. 20 (RBa)–Feb. 18 (JMo).

Yellow-headed Blackbirds lingered far afield in Grand I., Dec. 16 (*vide* WRS), while one observed Feb. 23 in Kiowa W.M.A. (LKM) may have overwintered.

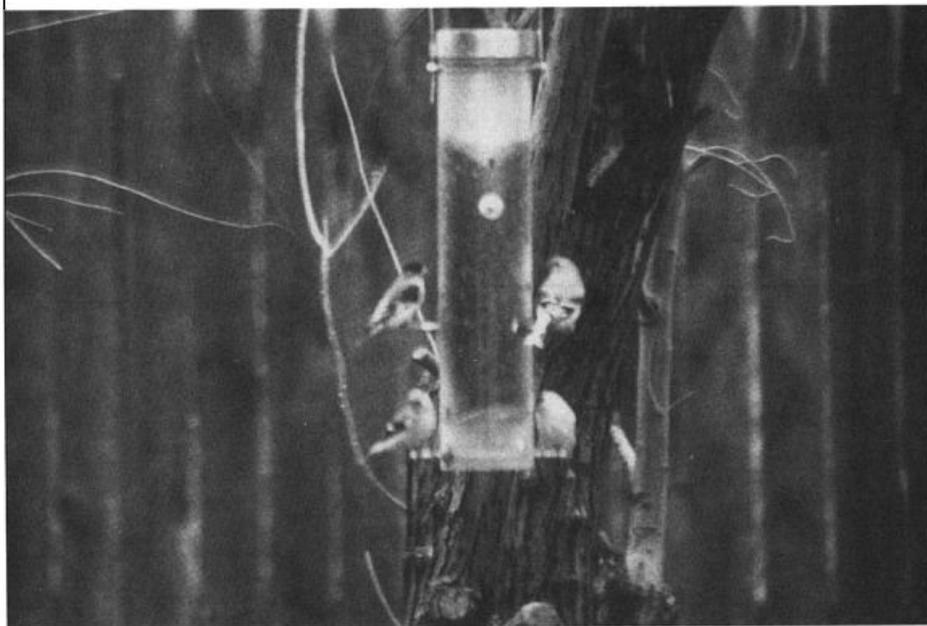
documented in *Dawes*, NE Jan. 17 (RCR), and another was apparently observed in *Wakefield*, NE Jan. 29–Feb. 29 (JoJ). Pine Siskins and Am. Goldfinches made only modest showings in the Region this period.

**Cited observers (area editors boldfaced):** Kansas: Don Arney, David Bryan, Mark Corder, Joyce Davis, Bob Dester, Bob Fisher, Vern Heinsohn, Chris Hobbs, **Pete Janzen**, Mark Land, Mike Lesan (MLe), Mick McHugh, **Lloyd Moore**, Galen Pittman, Mike Rader, John Rakestraw, Dale Roark, Richard Rucker, Max Thompson, Margaret Wedge. NEBRASKA: Gordon Brown, Kevin DeGamino (KDG), Stephen J. Dinsmore, Larry Einemann, Laurence Falk, Joe Gubanyi, Robin Harding, Joel Jorgensen, Lucy Koenig, Larry K.

# Texas Region

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

This was a wild bucking-bronco of a winter for weather. While we recognize that other parts of the country, such as the Northeast, suffered much worse than we did, we had our own problems. Forget precipitation; for the most part, nobody got anything useful, perhaps only a little snow or rain in late December or early January. The drought in west Texas went from "worse to worser" (K. Bryan). Around the town of Balmorhea in December, irrigated farmlands became magnets (*i.e.*, the only hospitable habitat) for vast numbers of open field birds such as pipits, sparrows, longspurs, and meadowlarks. South and central Texas got little or no measurable rain for most of January and February. Even east Texas dried out. There was plenty of wind and *dust*, however. An early strong cold front brought freezing temperatures deep into south Texas December 9–10. Through January we virtually got whiplash as successive blustery fronts with north winds alternated, sometimes on a 48-hour rotation, with gusty south breezes. In west Texas again, measurable amounts of dust from several dust storms exceeded rainfall totals. In February we went through a roller coaster of temperature extremes. Many areas of central and east Texas had all-time record lows for February in a cold snap during the first few days of the month. Just over two weeks later, February 21–23, all-time record highs for the month were being set in the same areas. Austin's range of 19°F–99°F broke an old record for the *range* of temperatures for February. Well into the spring we would continue to recognize curious effects on many habitats from both ends of these fluctuations. One of the most disturbing effects immediately apparent was the increase in grass and brush fires. Massive blazes roared across several counties in north and central Texas. On the Fort Hood Military Reservation, a 30,000-acre fire destroyed thousands of acres of habitat for two endangered birds: Five-hundred acres of Black-capped Vireo habitat were destroyed (Their habitat is fire successional and it will come back in several years.). More distressing was the loss of an estimated 150,000 acres of prime



**Male Lesser Goldfinch [the upper, black-capped bird] with American Goldfinches at Tulsa, Oklahoma, in March 1996. The bird had been present since January 31. Photograph/Vera Hughes.**

Between 6–32 Great-tailed Grackles wintered in Lincoln, NE, only the 2nd group to be recorded through the winter period. One Brown-headed Cowbird in *Buffalo*, NE Jan 19 (JoJ) was also noteworthy.

A Purple Finch in *Keith*, NE Dec. 21 (*vide* WRS) was w. of most sightings. Only modest numbers were reported from e. Nebraska, and one must wonder how this species is faring against the recent invasion of House Finches. Among the rarer finches were two White-winged Crossbills in Norfolk Cemetery Jan. 29 (MB, EB), and two at North Platte Feb. 23 (WWy).

Common Redpolls staged a showing in Nebraska, with small numbers along its s. boundary. A tally of 27 redpolls were counted at 6 localities in Kansas between Dec. 31–Feb. 18 (*vide* LM). A Hoary Redpoll was

Malone, Lanny Randolph, Neal Ratzlaff, **W. Ross Silcock**, Gertrude Wood. OKLAHOMA: Jim Arterburn, David Brotherton, Charles Brown, Vicki Byre, William A. Carter, L. Cooms, Jeff Cox, J. Dole, David Elmendorf, L. Fritts, Bonnie Gall, Neil Garrison, Cindy Goddard, Joseph A. Grzybowski, Jim Harman, M. Harrall, Vanessa Harris, Berlin Heck, Laura Hunnicutt, Jay Isbell, Vera Jennings, June Ketchum, Nathan Kuhnert, Glenda Leslie, **Jo Loyd**, **Louis McGee (LMc)**, **Jeri McMahan**, **John G. Newell**, Jim Norman, R. Phillips, Dan L. Reinking, J. Robertson, Aline Romero, Pat Seibert, Virginia Seibert, John S. Shackford, John Sterling, Shari Stoddard, Richard Stuart, Jack D. Tyler, Jeff Webster.

—Joseph A. Grzybowski, 715 Elmwood Drive, Norman, OK 73072.

Golden-cheeked Warbler habitat in the same event. The latter is an old-growth habitat (by central Texas standards), which may not regenerate to suitable stature for the warblers for at least 40–50 years. In one of Mother Nature's simple ironies, many of the areas where warbler habitat was lost will go through a successional stage suitable for the Black-capped Vireo.

There were no major winter invasions; in this context, a heightened abundance of Red-breasted Nuthatches in many areas seemed even more conspicuous. Siskins arrived early only to disappear from many areas for the season, later to reappear. Can we surmise that they mostly migrated through Texas this winter, coming and going? The shutdown of the federal government in December materially affected important data collection and recreational opportunities in Texas, as elsewhere. Christmas Bird Counts centered in or around national wildlife refuges and national parks were cancelled or severely curtailed; that is a large suite of CBCs in Texas.

Abbreviations: Ft. Bliss (*Fort Bliss sewage ponds, El Paso*); G.M.N.P. (*Guadalupe Mountains N.P.*); L.R.G.V. (*Lower Rio Grande Valley*); T.B.R.C. (*Texas Bird Records Committee/Texas Ornithological Society*). The following are shortened names for the respective county, state, or national parks, wildlife refuges, etc.: Anahuac, Anzalduas, Aransas, Balmorhea, Bentsen, Big Bend, Buffalo Lake, Choke

Canyon, Hagerman, Sabal Palms, Seminole Canyon, and Santa Ana.

### Loons to Spoonbill

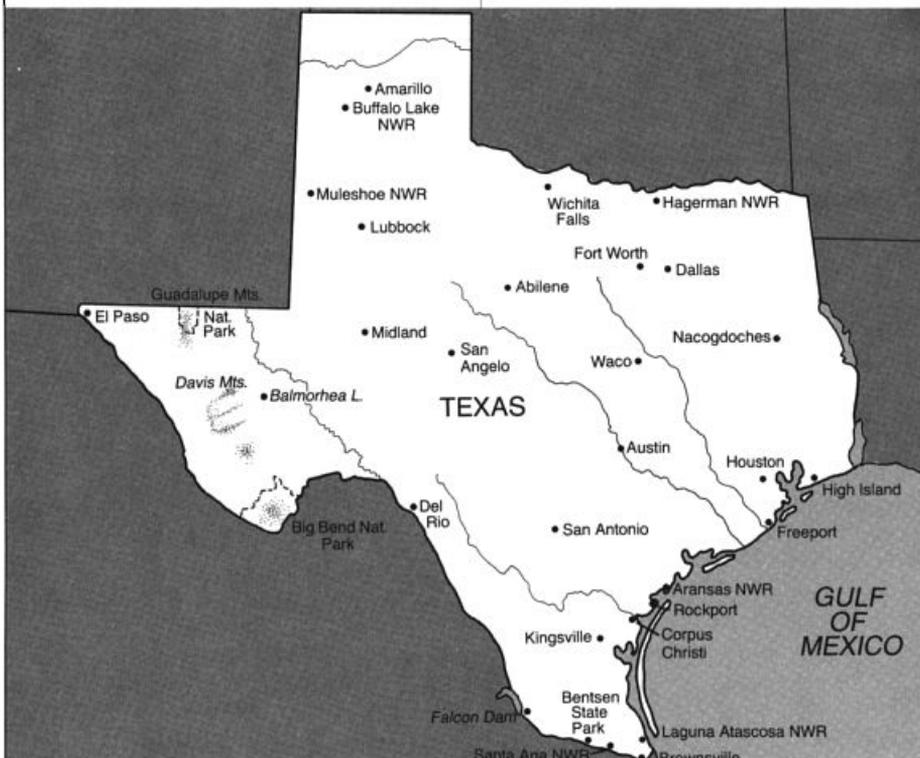
Loon watching across Texas is producing a plethora of sp. records we used to consider very rare. Red-throated Loons were at L. Tawakoni Dec. 16 (†RR) and Jan. 23 (†MWh), and two Red-throated were at Cooper L., *Delta/Hopkins*, Dec 17–22 (†RR, MWh). A Pacific Loon was at Imperial Res., *Pecos*, Dec. 2 (†BF, PH), with other single birds at L. Tawakoni Dec. 25 (†BF, MWh, PH) and Goose I., *Aransas*, Jan. 30 (†WC). A Least Grebe at *Victoria* Dec. 16 (*vide ME*) was unusual, but really surprising were three–four Least Grebes that remained in Beaumont through the winter (ph., JW *et al.*). A high concentration for the Panhandle was  $\geq$ seven Horned Grebes on Greenbelt L., *Donley*, Feb. 23–29 (PA, m.ob.). Unexpected in winter, a Sooty Shearwater was identified Feb. 24 flying along the beach with numbers of N. Gannets on N. Padre I., *Kleberg* (†WS, MC). Masked Boobies are typically summer and fall birds in Texas, but some show up in winter as well. This season three were on Mustang I., Feb. 23 and two were on N. Padre I., *Kleberg*, Feb. 28 (*vide GS, MC*). Northern Gannets were conspicuous Feb. 24–25 along N. Padre I., *Nueces/Kleberg*, with several hundred recorded (MC, WS). A count of 1000 Am. White Pelicans at Sam Rayburn Res., *San Augustine*, Dec. 5 (CSh) was a large concentration for that

area. Brown Pelicans again surprised observers by showing up at unexpected inland locations. Singles were at Salineño Dec. 9 (BMc), Ft. Bliss Dec. 16 (BFi), Imperial Res., *Pecos*, Feb. 16 (BJP), and Lubbock Feb. 24–27 (JCl, \* to Texas Tech University). The most surprising Brown Pelican, however, was a bird picked up in the middle of the highway at Pine Springs in G.M.N.P., Feb. 22 (FA). Double-crested Cormorants rarely winter in the Panhandle region, so one at Lubbock Jan. 3 (CSt) and another at Amarillo, *Potter*, Jan. 12–26 (KS) were notable. Just to the south of that area, Black reported Double-crested in record-high numbers at Abilene. A count of 399 Reddish Egrets Jan. 1 in *Cameron* was a good number for that area. Three Black-crowned Night-Herons, unexpected in the Panhandle in winter, were at Amarillo, *Randall*, Jan. 20–Feb. 12 (EK). A Glossy Ibis was identified at Anahuac Dec. 23–Jan. 15 (MA, JW, PDH). A first winter record for n.e. Texas of a Roseate Spoonbill was provided by one in *Harrison* Dec. 30 (TM).

### Waterfowl

One of the strangest waterfowl reports of the season was of a Fulvous Whistling-Duck standing in the Rio Grande near Cottonwood Campground in Big Bend Feb. 8 (MP). Tundra Swans showed up in scattered areas across much of the state. Eight were near Clarendon, *Donley*, Dec. 7 (KS), three were in *El Paso* Feb. 29 (LJ), one was on the King Ranch, *Kleberg*, for several weeks in January and February (TL). A collared Trumpeter Swan was near Justiceburg, *Garza*, Jan. 8–Mar. 4 (JSm). The collar indicated the bird originated from a Wisconsin reintroduction project (*vide CSt*). Snow Geese wintered in unprecedented numbers in the Panhandle area, with 60,000 at Cactus and Rita Blanca Lakes (JDR). Some thought that as many as 10% of these birds were Ross' Geese (*vide KS*).

**SA** In 1995 the San Solomon Springs Cienega project restored the marsh system associated with the spring at Balmorhea State Park. By fall 1995 the 4-acre marsh was already attracting a variety of birds. During this period, its first full season with water, the cienega attracted such unusual birds as: Wood Duck, Greater Scaup, Red-breasted Merganser, and Sedge Wren. One can only speculate about what other unexpected sp. will occur in the seasons to come at this new potential hotspot (KB).



There are a few records of Cinnamon Teal on the Caprock in winter, but 12 in *Randall* Dec. 16 (GF&HH) was unprecedented. The Amarillo Eur. Wigeon remained thorough the season, while other single birds were at L. Marvin, *Hemphill*, Dec. 2–14 (†KS, BG, BM), Tornillo Res., *El Paso*, Dec. 12–Jan. 19 (†BZ *et al.*), Feather L., *El Paso*, Dec. 2 (†JSp), and at Loy L., *Grayson*, Feb. 18+ (†WM, KH, ph., JCh). There are only about 22 records of this sp. in Texas. Unexpected Greater Scaup locations included one at Lubbock Jan. 4 (PK) and another at Santa Ana Feb. 25+ (R&LG). A Surf Scoter and an Oldsquaw were at L. Wright Patman Dec. 26 (BF&PH) and a Black Scoter was at San Antonio's Mitchell L., Dec. 17–26 (WS). There were scattered reports of all 3 scoter sp. at several coastal locations. Seven–nine Com. Goldeneyes on the Devil's River, *Val Verde* (KB *et al.*), provided a rare area record. A ♂ **Barrow's Goldeneye** was discovered Dec. 20 at Tornillo Res., *El Paso* (†ph., GL, BZ), providing a 5th documented Texas record and the first for the w. half of the state. Seventy-two Com. Mergansers at L. Electra, *Wilbarger*, Feb. 18 (RR) provided a high number for that area of Texas. For the 4th consecutive winter, ≤12 Masked Ducks took up winter quarters at Brazos Bend S.P., Nov. 12+ (ph., m.ob). To our knowledge, these are the only Masked Ducks in Texas this season.

### Raptors to Shorebirds

An imm. Com. Black-Hawk delighted observers at Salineño Feb. 19 (BMc *et al.*). Four Harris' Hawks in Lubbock Feb. 10 (PK, ST) added to the saga of that species from that region. Out-of-place Ferruginous Hawks included singles in *Delta* Dec. 12 (MWh), Cooper L., *Hopkins*, Dec. 17 (KN), and Lamar Feb. 1–2 (NS). An imm. Golden Eagle Dec. 23 in *Victoria* (NH) provided a rare area record, while three along the Colorado R. above L. Buchanan Jan. 21 (ML) were worthy of note. Single Merlins in *Delta* (KN) and *Harrison* Dec. 16 were unexpected. A Prairie Falcon seen at Waco Feb. 29 was unexpected (JMu).

Two Com. Moorhens in Austin Jan. 15 provided a rare inland record (LO). A new high-record 155 Whooping Cranes wintered at Aransas and nearby. Mountain Plovers were reported at several locations, with 44–50 near Driscoll, *Nueces*, Jan. 2–4 & 8 (E&NA, A&MC), ten near Bishop, *Nueces*, Jan. 7 (TL), and 26 near New Braunfels Feb. 2 (WS). Representing the only winter record for the n. Panhandle, nine Am. Avocets were at a feedlot pond in *Dallam* Dec. 2 (EK, RS). Locally unex-

pected were a Lesser Yellowlegs in *Lee* Jan. 10 (HB) and two Dunlins at White River L., *Crosby*, Dec. 25 (ML). Unexpected were 20–30 Long-billed Curlews wintering near Kress, *Swisher* (JR). Charlie Clark counted 730 Marbled Godwits at Rockport Dec. 4. A Solitary Sandpiper wintered in *Lee* (HB), while a Pectoral Sandpiper at Hagerman Feb. 15 (KH) was very early for n. Texas. American Woodcocks were generally thought to be in lower numbers than usual in some areas, but wandered to unexpected places. A woodcock was at Devil's River S.N.A., Feb. 22 (ph., KB), five–six were in Fort Worth through the winter (CH, m.ob.), and three were at Bentsen Feb. 2 (A&MC). Seyffert reports that Santa Claus was very good to Panhandle birders this yuletide, depositing a woodcock in an Amarillo backyard Christmas Day (C&NT, m.ob.); the bird was last seen Dec. 31.

### Gulls to Terns

A Parasitic Jaeger visited Galveston Feb. 4 (DPe), while there were several reports of Pomarines following shrimp boats through the season in that area. This winter was an absolutely banner year for rare gulls across much of Texas. The account below hits the highlights: Surprising was a Franklin's Gull Feb. 13–21 at Cooper L. (MWh); there are few winter records of this sp. from n. Texas. An ad. Little Gull was at Dallas' White Rock L., Dec 2 (†KR); this will represent the 24th Texas record if accepted by the T.B.R.C. There are 7 accepted records of Black-headed Gull in Texas, but never before more than one bird in a season. This year there were two: An ad. Black-headed Gull was at L. Tawakoni Dec. 10 (†MWh, BF, PH) and another was at Cooper L., Feb. 12+ (†MWh, m.ob.). Two Mew Gulls also showed up, an adult in Dallas Dec. 6 (†GHo, SP) and a 2nd-winter bird in San Antonio Dec. 2–Jan. 12 (†ph., WS, m.ob.). These 2 records will represent the 11th and 12th for Texas if accepted by the T.B.R.C. California Gulls again made news, with an adult at San Antonio Dec. 28–Jan. 10 (†ph., WS, m.ob.), another adult at Bolivar Flats Feb. 7 (†AF), a first-winter bird at Cooper L., Feb. 20–Mar. 5 (†MWh), and a first-winter bird at Austin which remained from the fall through the winter. Thayer's Gull has 23 currently accepted Texas records and we added at least 5 more (to be reviewed by the T.B.R.C.) this winter: A first-winter bird Dec. 15 at San Antonio (†PH), another first-winter bird at Fort Worth Dec. 16–22 (†CH), a first-winter bird Feb. 5–7 at Austin (†ph., WS), a first-winter bird Feb. 8 at Arlington (†ph., CH), and an ad. Thayer's at Corpus Christi Feb.

28+ (†GS, ph., WS). There were 4 documented coastal reports of Lesser Black-backed Gull: singles at Laguna Atascosa, Seadrift, Bolivar Flats, and on N. Padre L., *Kleberg*. Single imm. Glaucous Gulls were at *Galveston* (Bolivar Flats and East Beach) Dec. 2+ (†ph., PG, m.ob.), at Boca Chica (†JP) Dec. 28, at Port Arthur (†ph., LNi, KNi) Dec. 29, and at Amarillo (†KS, EK) Jan. 20.

**SA** A large black-backed gull was first found at Galveston's East Beach Jan. 15 and variously identified as a nominate Lesser Black-backed, a Great Black-backed, and a W. Gull by several observers. Matherly persisted with his idea that the bird was not any of the previously-mentioned species and encouraged observers to look closer. Finally Behrstock and Dunn determined Feb. 4 that it was a 3rd-year Kelp Gull (*Larus dominicanus*). This sp. had been reported in Louisiana in 1989, 1990, and 1994 [See AB 44:1147 and 49:59], but despite these records this sp. is not yet accepted in the United States. This was, obviously, the first record for Texas. There are published accounts of this sp. in Mexico [see Howell, S., *et al.* 1993. First Records of Kelp Gull in Mexico. *The Euphonia* 2:71–80.] and additional United States records might be expected. This bird remained fairly cooperative through the period and was seen, photographed, and video taped by hundreds of observers. Stay tuned for more information in our Spring report.

A first-winter Great Black-backed Gull joined the Kelp Gull at Galveston's East Beach Feb. 4+ (†ph., JD, BB, m.ob.), while another was identified at the



An apparent Kelp Gull at Galveston, Texas, February 4, 1996. A first for Texas if accepted, this southern hemisphere gull had been reported previously in Louisiana and Yucatan. Photograph/Peter Gottschling.

Brownsville dump Feb. 5 (†SMI). As with several other rare gulls, Black-legged Kittiwakes were found at several locations in the e. half of the state. First-winter birds were found at the following locations: two at Dallas Dec. 3–6 (†MWh, BGi), and singles at L. Tawakoni Dec. 25–26 (ph., †BF, PH, MWh), Galveston Feb. 10 (†RBr, BBr, RBa), and N. Padre Island, Kleberg, Feb. 24–28 (ph., †WS, MC). A Gull-billed Tern was unexpected at San Ygnacio Jan. 14 (RP).

### Doves to Woodpeckers

A White-winged Dove was reported from Palo Duro Canyon Feb. 18 (RBr) and six Inca Doves were in Dimmit, *Castro*, Feb. 3 (JRe). A Barred Owl was at L. Marvin Dec. 3 (BG, BM). Three Long-eared Owls spent most of the winter at Buffalo L. (KS, m.ob.). A unusual winter record was provided by a Com. Nighthawk at Sabine Woods Dec. 31 (JaW). A *Chaerura* swift Dec. 24 in Victoria provided an intriguing winter record (NH). Three out-of-range Blue-throated Hummingbirds were recorded, one at Corpus Christi Dec 1–2 (E&NA, GS), another bird there Dec. 9 (PY), and another in Mission Feb. 2–13 (LNo, ph. SB). The latter provided the first photographed record for the L.R.G.V. A Black-chinned Hummingbird Dec. 17 in Nacogdoches (CSh) provided a rare winter record for e. Texas. Western hummingbirds lingered throughout the state: Anna's, Broad-tailed, and Rufous were most frequently reported. The most interesting of the Anna's Hummingbirds was an ad. male from Dangerfield, *Morris*, Dec. 1+ (ph. HBl, CW). At least one of the **Costa's Hummingbirds** from last season stayed at an El Paso yard through Dec. 12. An imm. ♂ Calliope Hummingbird in El Paso Dec. 22 (BZ, ph., GL) provided the first photographed Texas winter record away from the coast. Another Calliope was reported from *Val Verde* Dec. 27 (SWie). We received reports that the Allen's Hummingbird from Victoria reported last season molted into ad. plumage. Currently there are fewer than 5 accepted records of this sp. for Texas, yet no documentation has been submitted to these editors or the T.B.R.C. for this bird, which was apparently captured, measured, and photographed.

A Ringed Kingfisher wandered to *Victoria* Jan. 26 (NH). Both El Paso Lewis' Woodpeckers mentioned in the fall report remained through at least Feb. 14. An Acorn Woodpecker graced *Midland* from Jan. 4–Feb. 29 (DHu, *et al.*). A Red-bellied Woodpecker was observed at Buffalo L., Dec. 9 (EK, RSc) and another was in Lubbock Jan. 24–26 (CSt, PK). As men-

**HANDBOOK IN THE INTERNET**



## HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD

This series of volumes will inevitably become the standard general reference work  
*British Birds*

**Volume 3 (Hoatzin to Auks)  
available September 1996**

**Fabulous pre-publication  
offer expires September 15, 1996**

See several sample plates, photographs and texts on:  
<http://www.hbw.com>

You can also ask for a 4-page color brochure about Volume 3 from:



c/o Celadon Logistics, One Celadon Drive,  
9503 East 33rd St., Indianapolis, IN 46236  
e-mail:lynx@hbw.com

tion last season, Red-naped Sapsuckers continued a surprising showing in s. Texas, with the two birds at Sarita present through the season and singles at Anzalduas Feb. 4–7 (SMI) and Brownsville Feb. 20 (BF). An additional unexpected record was one Jan. 11–14 in Lubbock (ST, JC, AR). Williamson's Sapsuckers were reported from G.M.N.P., Feb. 19 (CS) and a pair was in Madera Canyon (Davis Mts.) through the period (m.ob.). The El Paso Downy Woodpecker remained through the season.

### Flycatchers to Swallows

A **Greater Pewee** was in a residential El Paso neighborhood (a block away from last winter's Gray Silky-flycatcher spot) Dec. 5–14 (BJ, †ph., BZ) providing only the 5th well-documented Texas record. A very early E. Wood-Pewee was found Feb. 21 at Sabal Palms (JDa). A wintering "Western" Flycatcher was observed Dec. 16 and Feb. 17 at Corpus Christi (WS, J & BRi). A Black Phoebe was present through the period at Midland (m.ob.). Say's Phoebes are occasionally observed in early winter in the Panhandle; this season one was in *Randall* Dec. 16 (GF, HH) and another in *Amarillo*, *Potter*, Dec. 23

(TLJ). Another Say's Phoebe was farther east in *Wichita* Dec. 16 (JC). A Great Crested Flycatcher was found Dec. 30 at Sabal Palms (HL), providing a rare winter record for this species. A report of a Dusky-capped Flycatcher from Sabal Palms Feb. 1 (†WC) will be forwarded to the T.B.R.C.; this species has never been reported from the L.R.G.V., but it occurs in areas 250 mi s. of there. Tropical Kingbirds continued through the season at the previously reported *Cameron* locations. A new location for this species was Santa Ana; two birds were documented there



**Greater Pewee at El Paso, Texas, December 6, 1995. Photograph/Barry Zimmer.**

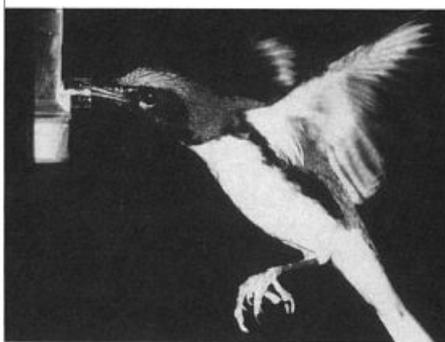
Feb. 10 (BMc). An out-of-place Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was in San Marcos Jan. 23 (DHe). A ♀ Rose-throated Becard was at Santa Ana Feb. 18+ (†ph. P&TF, BMC). A Barn Swallow at Waco Dec. 7 was very late (JMu).

### Jays to Shrikes

The Blue Jay reported during the fall at Edinburg remained until Dec. 9 (TB); another individual at Falfurrias was seen Feb. 9 (SW); curiously, this was *not* an invasion year for the sp. elsewhere in Texas. A W. Scrub-Jay present in Midland Dec. 16–Feb. 29 provided an interesting record (*fide* FW). Two Com. Ravens, rare in the Panhandle, were observed at Channing, *Hartley*, Dec. 2 (KS, PA). Even more unusual was a Com. Raven at San Ygnacio Feb. 18 (GMC); the closest known population is in the Sierra Picachos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, 100 mi to the south. Red-breasted Nuthatches continued to be reported in above-average numbers in c. and s. Texas. An out-of-place Rock Wren was reported from L. Lewisville, *Denton*, Dec. 27 (MMi). Winter Wrens were more commonly reported from the Panhandle to the c. coast; more notable records came from L. Marvin, *Hemphill*, Dec. 14 (KS), Lubbock Jan. 9 (PK), and Palo Duro Canyon Jan. 13 (EK). A Sedge Wren found in Lubbock Jan. 9 (PK) provided one of the few records for that area. A Wood Thrush Dec. 22 in *Harris* (PDH) and another at Sea Rim Dec. 31 (JW) were noteworthy. A Clay-colored Robin was reported without documentation at Salineño during November; it fortunately stuck around long enough for Gordon to write an excellent description Dec. 31. Another Clay-colored Robin was at Santa Ana during February (†m.ob.). A ♂ Varied Thrush was discovered at Balmorhea Feb. 9 and remained through Feb. 22 (†TJ ph., m.ob). It was a good winter for N. Shrikes in the Panhandle area, with at least eight different birds recorded from *Lubbock to Dallam* (m.ob.).



Male Varied Thrush at Balmorhea State Park, Texas, February 15, 1996. Photograph/Jim Flynn.



Seen here hovering at the hummingbird feeder that sustained it, this male Black-throated Blue Warbler spent much of the winter in a yard in Houston, Texas. Photograph/Robert A. Behrstock.

### Vireos to Warblers

Bryan suspects that White-eyed Vireos may be permanent residents in riparian habitat along the Devil's R. in *Val Verde*. The sp. was reported all season there (WC), and at least five singing birds were detected Feb. 22. A Solitary Vireo in Lubbock Feb. 15 (ST, JH) was a rare find, while a Yellow-throated Vireo Dec. 16 in *Tyler* was also a good find (JW). Orange-crowned Warbler is very rare in winter on the Caprock areas of the Panhandle; two were in Amarillo Jan. 26 (EK, PT). A few N. Parulas have wintered at Big Bend for several years; one was at Rio Grande Village Jan. 7–Feb. 13 (MF, LO). Another N. Parula was in Davis Mountains S.P., Dec. 11–Jan. 19 (*fide* KB), a time period that included several light snow falls and temperatures as low as 12° F., certainly not optimum conditions for a *parulid*. Single Yellow Warblers at Choke Canyon Dec. 23 (WS, DMu) and Harlingen Jan. 5 (SW) were surprising. A Cape May Warbler was well described at San Ygnacio Jan. 14 (†RP); this sp. occasionally occurs in Texas during the winter. Another Cape May was in Port Aransas Nov. 5–11 (JHol) visiting a hummingbird feeder. A Black-throated Blue Warbler spent the entire winter in the Risser's Houston yard, feeding regularly from a hummingbird feeder until it was run over by a car Feb. 6. Another Black-throated Blue was in Victoria from December into early January. An "Audubon's" Yellow-rumped Warbler at Caddo L., *Marion*, Dec. 2 (PHA) was certainly unexpected at this e. location. Black-throated Gray Warblers made news in several locations; one was found in San Antonio Dec. 9 (CCu), at least five wintered or were found during the season in the L.R.G.V., one was in Castroville Feb. 26 (GSc), and one was at Big Bend's Rio Grande Village Jan. 22 (BD). A Townsend's Warbler was seen at San Ygnacio Jan. 27 (WS), while a Black-throated

Green Warbler was in Victoria Dec. 7–Jan. 31. Another Black-throated Green was in Corpus Christi Dec. 6 (GS), and yet another was really unexpected at Austin Jan. 27 (FD). There were about a half-dozen Yellow-throated Warblers through the season at locations, including New Braunfels, Victoria, Port Aransas, and elsewhere. A Pine Warbler in Lubbock Jan. 14 (ST) was unexpected, as was one in Midland Jan. 6–Feb. 29 (*fide* FW). A Prairie Warbler near L. Tawakoni Dec. 6–11 (MWh, m.ob.) provided a first winter record for that area, while one at Camp Tyler, *Smith*, Jan. 5 (DHa) was also noteworthy. Other Prairie Warbler records were scattered along the coast, where a little more expected. A Palm Warbler in *Grayson* Feb. 17 (*fide* KH) was totally unexpected. A late inland Ovenbird Dec. 14 in *Lee* surprised Brown. Very unexpected was a Kentucky Warbler in Harlingen Jan. 5 (SW), as was a Mourning Warbler near Corpus Christi Dec. 16 (*fide* GS).

**SA** A yellowthroat sp. at San Ygnacio was responsible for one of the most interesting (and often lively) debates in Texas birding history. The bird was probably present since mid-November, but did not start attracting a great deal of attention until early January. Plumage characters indicated the bird was a Gray-crowned Yellowthroat, but structure, behavior, and voice led some experienced observers to believe it was more likely a Com. Yellowthroat or perhaps a hybrid of some sort. Clouding the issue further was the fact that other observers, also very familiar with Gray-crowns, felt that the bird was well within limits of variation to be fully acceptable as a true Gray-crowned. At this writing the bird had been netted, extensively photographed, measured, video-taped, and tape recorded. Recordings have been sent to several bird sound libraries and many people are taking measurements of museum specimens in the attempt to arrive at an identification that is acceptable to most people. The bird has provided a tremendous learning experience for all, and we will keep you posted on the outcome.

The report of another Gray-crowned Yellowthroat seen briefly at Bentsen Dec. 29 (†HL) will be reviewed by the T.B.R.C. Just after the snowy cold spells, a Wilson's Warbler showed up at Balmorhea Jan. 6 and remained through the period (TJ).



One of the most controversial birds of the decade, this yellowthroat at San Ygnacio, Texas, was studied by many during the winter of 1995–1996. First identified as a Gray-crowned, it was later pegged as a probable Common Yellowthroat, but a growing body of evidence suggested it could be a hybrid. Photograph/Jim Flynn.

### Tanagers to Finches

There were scattered reports of Summer and Western tanagers along the coast throughout the season. A ♀ W. Tanager in Dallas Dec. 16 (JP *et al.*) provided the first winter record for that area. Truly unaccountable was a ♂ Rose-breasted Grosbeak visiting feeders in Palo Duro Canyon Feb. 25 (PA). This is the only winter record and the earliest spring (?) sighting by 2 months for the Panhandle (*vide* KS). A ♀ Blue Bunting was observed irregularly at Bentsen from Dec. 17+ (†LM, BMC, SMI, m.ob.). This species is occasionally reported in the L.R.G.V. during winter, but most reports prove to be Indigos. The present bird has been well documented by a number of observers. Prior to this report, the most recent accepted record of this sp. in Texas was in 1990. A ♂ Painted Bunting was in San Antonio Dec. 9 (GSc), providing a very rare winter record



Bobolink in Brazos Bend State Park, Texas, December 27, 1995. Normally wintering in southern South America, the species is extremely rare anywhere in North America in winter. Photograph/LaDonna Nichols.

for that area. Other Painted Buntings at Matagorda Dec. 18 (DMu) and in Corpus Christi Jan. 13–20 (GS, J&VS) were slightly more expected. There were 6 Dickcissel reports in coastal and s. Texas, but one at Edgewood, Van Zandt, Feb. 15 (RK) was a real surprise. Overall, wintering sparrow numbers were very low, especially in the w. parts of the state, where lack of rain left seed crops very low. Lark Buntings were unreported in the Panhandle (KS), and were missing from their normal wintering areas in Kleberg, Brooks, Live Oak and other areas where often thousands are found in winter (*vide* PP). Henslow's Sparrows were again found in several e. Texas areas this season, with birds located in Nacogdoches, Walker, Marion, Hardin, and Chambers. A LeConte's Sparrow at Seminole Canyon Feb. 7 (WC) was somewhat out-of-place. The Golden-



Henslow's Sparrow in Nacogdoches County, Texas, January 22, 1996. One of three species of *Ammodramus* sparrows (Henslow's, Grasshopper, Le Conte's) found wintering in a 25-acre bluestem field. Photograph/Cliff Shackelford.

crowned Sparrow at Hueco Tanks in the fall remained through the period, but could be hard to find. Totally unexpected was a Bobolink at Brazos Bend, Fort Bend, Dec. 27 (KNi, ph., LNi), providing probably the first photographed winter record for the Region. This was a banner winter for Rusty Blackbirds in n.e. Texas. One Rusty was found in San Augustine Dec. 7 (CSh), while 300 were in Rusk and 122 were in Gregg in early December (GLu). At Lake O'The Pines >600 were tallied Jan. 1 (m.ob.). Elsewhere, five Rusty Blackbirds at L. Marvin Dec. 14 (KS) provided a surprise for the Panhandle, while one at Ft. Bliss Dec. 15 (BZ) provided a very rare El Paso area record. An Orchard Oriole wintered at Port Aransas at a hummingbird feeder (JHol), while a Baltimore Oriole spent most of the winter at Sarita (N&PP). Purple Finches were fairly conspicuous in n.c. and n.e. Texas at several locations (m.ob.). A single Purple Finch was at Tahoka, Lynn, Dec. 29 (MCA). A 2nd documented Texas record for Lawrence's Goldfinch was provided by a bird photographed Feb. 11 in El Paso (†BJ). Pine Siskins were in above-normal numbers in n.c. Texas, but generally described as in low numbers elsewhere until late in the season, when their numbers increased significantly in many locations. The Evening Grosbeaks in the Davis Mountains from the fall lingered until Dec. 15 (KB).

### Corrigenda

The photo of the Long-tailed Jaeger in AB Vol. 48: 129 was mistakenly credited to Gary Hunter. The photographer was Tonya Worley. We apologize for our error. And in AFN Vol. 49:952 mentions an Eastern Towhee singing June 14, 1995 near Tyler. This should be Tyler (county), not the city, a mistake of >200 miles.

### Undocumented rarities

Several reports of rare or very rare birds (Texas Review Species) were received with insufficient or no documentation. Omitted from this column were reports of Red-throated Loon (L. Texoma & Lubbock), Brant (Lubbock), Lesser Black-backed Gull (Ft. Worth, Galveston, and two on the c.coast), Black-legged Kittiwake (Port Aransas), and Golden-crowned Warbler (Sabal Palms).

Cited observers (Subregional Editors in boldface): Peggy Acord, Lynn Aldrich, Fred Armstrong, Nina & Eddie Arnold, John Arvin, Mike Austin, Robby Bacon, Kay Baughman, Giff Beaton, Jean Beck, Bob Behrstock, Chris Benesh, Steve

Bentsen, Peter Billingham, Lorie Black, Al & Mel Black, Marge Blackburn, Hazel Bluhm, Doug Booher, Bill Bourbon, **David Bradford** (East Texas: 18046 Green Hazel, Houston, TX 77084. e-mail: brdfrd@tenet.edu), Barbara & Roger Breedlove (B&RBr), David & Luanne Brotherton (D&LBro), Hugh Brown, Hans Brunotte, Andrena Brunotte, Barbara Bruns, Tim Brush, **Kelly Bryan** (Trans-Pecos: P.O. Box 786, Ft. Davis, TX 79734), John Buckman, Marty Campbell (MCA), Oscar Carmona, Jack Childs (JCh), Charlie Clark, Jeremy Clark (JCl), Chris Collins, Wendy Connally, Will Cook, Arlie & Mel Cooksey, E. Cowan, Carolyn Cuthbertson (CCu), John Cys, France Davis, Bruce Decker, Jean Dake, Betty Rae Davis, Jeff Davis (JDa), Louis Debetaz, Jon Dunn, Dave Durham, Charles Easley, Mark Elwonger, Rosemary English, Andrew Farnsworth, Harold Fetter, Betty Fisbeck (BFi), Mark Flippo, Fort Worth Audubon Society, Tony & Phyllis Frank, Brush Freeman, Gil Fry, Red & Louise Gambill, Hugh Garnett, Brian Gibbons (BGi), Jeff Gordon (JGo), Peter Gottschling, Bill Graber, Karl Haller, Hap Hamous, Peggy Harding (PHa), George Harmon, Bob Harrison, Dale Hartsfield (DHa), Jill Haukos, Carl Haynie, Tom Hayes, Dick Henderson (DHe), Petra Hockey, Gary Hodnee (GHo), Joe Holbrook, Norman Holgerson, Margo Holst, P.D. Hulce, Don Hunter (DHu), David Hurt, Robert Hurt, Joe Ideker, Bob Johnson, Tom Johnson, Thomas L. Johnson (TLJ), Larry Jordan, Bill Kelley, Richard Kinney, Phillip Kite, Ed Kutac, Tom Langschied, Bob Lanier, Greg Lasley, Harry LeGrand, Lee Lemmons, Llano Estacado Audubon Society, Keith Lockhart, Mark Lockwood, Ron Lockwood, Jim Luce, Guy Luneau (GLu), Bob Madrulli, P.K. Martin, Elke Matejivich, Steve Matherly, Guy McCaskie, Marline McGuire, Debra McKee, Brad McKinney (BMc), Tony Messina, Wayne Meyer, Mike Mizell (MMi), Steve Mlodinow (SMl), Ralph Moldenhauer, Laura Moore, Carroll Moore, Derek Muschalek (DMu), Candy Myers, Ken Nanney, Luci Nash, Kenny Nichols (NKi), LaDonna Nichols (LNi), Gail & Terry Nickel, Linda Northrop (LNo), Julius Nussbaum, Lisa O'Donnell, L.C. Olmstead, Brent Ortego, Nancy & **Paul Palmer** (South Texas: 615 South Wanda, Kingsville, TX 78363. e-mail: kfpcp00@taiu.edu), Emily Payne, Dick Payne, Dwight Peake (DPe), Marcos Peredes, Jim Peterson, Tom Pincelli, Randy Pinkston, Barbara Pothast, Alice Rasa, **Ross Rasmussen** (N.C. Texas: 600 S. Graves #1704, McKinney, TX 75069),

James D. Ray (JDR), Joel Reese (JRe), Martin Reid, John & Barbara Ribble (J&BRi), Kay Rice, Artie & Hanna Richard, Peter Riesz, Jan & Will Risser, Kristin Salas (KSa), Larry Sall, Nancee Salzman, Rick Schaefer, Georgina Schwarz (GSc), Rosemary Scott (RSc), Jim Seeden, Chuck Sexton, **Ken Seyffert** (Panhandle: 2206 S. Lipscomb, Amarillo, TX 79109), Cliff Shackelford (CSh), J.W. Sifford, Joel & Vicki Simon (J&VS), Lynn Smith, Jennifer Smith, Kim Snipes, John Sproul (JSp), Tom Stehn, Cliff Stogner (CSt), Glenn Swartz, Paul Sykes, James Thomas, Susan Tomlinson, Peggy Trosper, Champ & Nancy Turner, Al Valentine, Betty Vernon, Virgil Wade, Ro Wauer, Herbert Wessling, Ed Wetzel, Matt White (MWh), John Whittle, Jana Whittle (JaW), Richard Wilberforce, Egon & Sue Wiedenfeld (E&SWie), Steve Williams, Frances Williams, Jeff Witt, Bonnie & Richard Wright, Charles Wright, Phyllis Yochem, Barry Zimmer.

—*Greg W. Lasley, 305 Loganberry Ct., Austin, TX 78745-6527 (e-mail: GregLasley@aol.com) and Chuck Sexton, 101 E. 54th St., Austin, TX 78751-1232 (e-mail: chuck\_sexton@mail.fws.gov).*

# Idaho-Western Montana Region

## DAN SVINGEN

Skiers, homeowners, birders, and birds were all kept guessing in winter 1995-1996. The season started unseasonably mild, and many species lingered. The sudden arrival of heavy snow and very cold temperatures in early January caused an influx of semi-hardy species into urban areas. In late January, the return of above-normal temperatures then subjected north Idaho and west-central Montana to severe flooding. Particularly hard hit was low-lying riparian forest, which was completely demolished in some areas. The biological significance of this disturbance is heightened by the fact that only small remnants had survived past development. Weather conditions changed again in mid-February, when cold weather returned to the Region, causing another urban influx of

