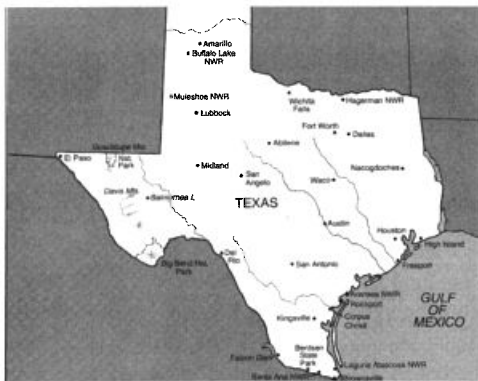


texas region



**GREG W. LASLEY, CHUCK SEXTON,
MARK LOCKWOOD,
and CLIFF SHACKELFORD**

This summer, even by Texan standards, was “hotter ‘n hell,” Seyffert in the Panhandle dismissed that as an understatement. In his region a record temperature of 108°F was set. A core area of central and north Texas from Austin north to the Red River found itself trapped under a high pressure dome of sinking air which produced long stretches of brutal 100°F and above weather.

Numerically this was among the hottest and driest summers on record statewide. Rainfall was sparse to nonexistent in most areas (e.g. Edinburg received 0.0” for the two months; some areas of the Trans-Pecos received 0.17” between January and June). The monsoon season brought some relief rains to the mountains of the Trans-Pecos in July and there were some local showers elsewhere, but soaking rains would not show up until August. National news articles catalogued the terrible toll on the human environment, which included well over 100 fatalities ascribed to the heat. Here we try to sort out the effects of these extreme environmental conditions on the avian world.

To be truthful, there were ambivalent and even contradictory clues during this nesting season. As we headed into June, some species seemed to be well-represented by noisy broods in many areas. This was particularly true for cavity nesters such as chickadees, titmice, and wrens. If there was any general pattern (and this is not yet confirmed by quantitative observations), it seemed as if resident species such as cardi-

nals were quite productive, while neotropical migrant passerines (e.g. Purple Martins, Golden-cheeked Warblers) were struggling to produce any young. Some observers felt that seedeaters such as cardinals, sparrows, and buntings were more successful than true insectivores (although we know that the former group dine on insects extensively during the nesting season). Did their capacity to subsist on the seed crop from spring grasses and flowers give them an advantage that strict insectivores lacked? Understandably, birds in well-watered urban habitats—such as jays, starlings, mockingbirds, and grackles—seemed to do fine relative to birds in the countryside. Hummingbirds, as nectar feeders, perhaps suffered the worst impact on nesting efforts. Breeding success of Broad-taileds in the montane west and of *Archilochus* in central and east Texas was poor. Interestingly, colonial waterbirds at coastal and inland rookeries were mostly very productive.

June was filled with more than a typical load of late-lingering northbound migrants. Were these the result of wind and storm patterns, or could the drought conditions have halted some weakened (or uninspired) birds in mid-migration? As the stunning heat of June and July set in, whole ecosystems seemed to go into dormancy. The fate of many young birds produced early in the season may be rightly questioned; young Purple Martins were reportedly “fried” in their houses in north Texas. Observers had to wonder if food supplies could sustain the young of any species and whether they would be able to survive the stressful heat and dryness. By July, many nesting birds, young and adults alike, abandoned breeding grounds early to fend for themselves or to try to reach more equable climates. This report is replete with sightings of early southbound migrants; we suspect this is a symptom of the exodus, particularly among breeding birds of the suffering southern U.S. latitudes.

There seemed to be at least a modest upward trend of the numbers of birders braving the heat. The timely conveyance of discoveries on such forums as Audubon’s TexBirds listserv was clearly an inspirational avenue of communications. TexBirds also provides an important archive of many details of birding reports that we cannot include here, although it obviously carries

the caveat of being a raw, unedited, unfiltered source of data.

We appreciate the help this season of Linda Hedges with the compilation of the Trans-Pecos information.

Abbreviations: L.R.G.V. (*Lower Rio Grande Valley*); S.S.W.T.P. (*South Side Water Treatment Plant, Dallas*); T.C.W.C. (*Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection/Texas A&M University*), U.T.C. (*Upper Texas Coast*). The following are shortened names for the respective county, state, or national parks, wildlife refuges, etc Anahuac, Aransas, Attwater, Balcones Canyonlands, Bentsen, Big Bend, Colorado Bend, Hagerman, Hueco Tanks, Kickapoo, Laguna Atascosa, San Bernard, and Santa Ana

GREBES TO STORKS

Least Grebes apparently had a good nesting season in the L.R.G.V. where water was available; three at San Antonio’s Mitchell L all summer were odd (m.ob.). A pair of Eared Grebes with one juvenile was at Mitchell L. June 18 (BDo). Both species of *Aechmophorus* grebes were at several Trans-Pecos reservoirs; however no definite nesting evidence was observed (BZ, JPa, MAd) Amos found two beached **Greater Shearwaters**, one on Mustang I., Nueces, June 29 and another on San Jose I., *Aransas*, July 30 (both * to T.C.W.C.); these represent the 8th and 9th documented Texas records. A July 20 pelagic off Freeport, *Brazoria*, yielded two Leach’s Storm-Petrels, nine Band-rumped Storm-Petrels, and four Audubon’s Shearwaters (DPe, RG, † RWe, m.ob.) Weeks reported a high number of Masked Boobies found dead or turned in for rehab on the U.T.C., with five from *Brazoria* alone Brown Pelicans had a phenomenal nesting season in Galveston Bay, with 1000+ fledglings in July (WB, BGa) further documenting their recovery in recent years. Three Double-crested Cormorants at Mitchell L. in July (GSc) were unusual, as were scattered individuals in the High Plains, Panhandle, and n.c. Texas (m.ob.). The nesting colony of Double-crested at Palo Duro L., *Hansford*, increased over the previous year (KS). In the absence of any tropical storm activity, a frigatebird sp. over *Bastrop* June 29 (BFr) was a bizarre sighting. Two Least Bitterns were found in *Midland* July 3 & 4 for only the 2nd county record (JHe).

City officials from Carrollton, *Dallas*,

reacting to complaints of unpleasant odors and noise from a local heron rookery, bulldozed the site at 4 a.m. July 23. It is estimated that 1000+ herons and egrets (mostly Cattle Egrets) were killed. Hundreds of juvenile birds were rescued by local rehabbers. This event sparked much controversy in the media and on the Internet.

A pair of Great Blue Herons nesting at McNary, *Hudspeth*, June 13 (BZ) provided the first Trans-Pecos breeding in decades. A Tricolored Heron was very much a rarity in *Yoakum*, July 31 (C&FR). An ad. Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at McNary June 13 (BZ) provided a rare Trans-Pecos summer record. There was an incursion of White Ibises into c. and n.e. Texas; up to 30 were in Waco during July (EGW) and 100+ were at Cooper L., *Delta/Hopkins*, throughout the period (K&MWh). Nesting was suspected at the latter location. Rare but expected, single Glossy Ibises were at Mitchell L. June 16 (BDo) and in Beaumont July 4 (JWh). There were some very early Roseate Spoonbill records inland: 15 at Mitchell L. June 5 (*fide* GSc) and three at Salado, *Bell*, July 6–26 (RPi). A large concentration of 300 Wood Storks was found at Mitchell L. June 17 (KBa).

WATERFOWL

An unusual e. Texas nesting record was provided by six ad. and 10 young Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks in *Trinity* June 14 (DAn). Two Fulvous Whistling-Ducks at Mitchell L. June 18–July 4 were somewhat surprising (BDo). A Fulvous Whistling-Duck lingered at V.C.D.B. until June 14 (JWS). Four Mottled Ducks at Mitchell L. through the period were unusual (WS). There were an inordinate number of unexpected waterfowl; the most notable included ten Blue-winged Teal in *Hudspeth* June 27 (MAd); two Cinnamon Teal at S.S.W.T.P. July 19–25 (LHa, RR); a Green-winged Teal in *Jeff Davis* June 19 (GL, RW); single Canvasbacks at Mitchell L. June 3–July 8 (m.ob) and *Tarrant* in July (m.ob.); a Greater Scaup at Tornillo, *El Paso*, June 13 (BZ); a Red-breasted Merganser on the Red R., *Grayson*, June 22–July 18 (LL); and two Com. Mergansers at Tornillo Res. June 13 (BZ). Given the drought in the Panhandle, a surprise find was a hen N. Shoveler with six chicks in *Randall* July 1 (KS). A Masked Duck was present through the season on private property in *Cameron* (ph., TC).

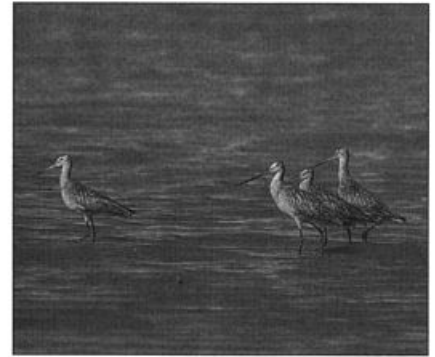
RAPTORS

Ospreys nested at 2 locations in s.e. Texas; one at the s. end of Toledo Bend Res. and

another in Houston (m.ob.). The Swallow-tailed Kites in *Orange* fledged two young (*fide* CSh). A late Mississippi Kite was noted in San Antonio June 8 (KBa), while an early migrant was at Smithville, *Bastrop*, July 12 (BFR); the species is not known to nest in these areas. A N. Harrier at S.S.W.T.P. July 16 (MWh, MGa) provided a first July record for *Dallas*. Three Sharp-shinned Hawks were in the Davis Mts. June 20–24 (KB, JKa, m.ob.), an area where nesting is not known. Unusual records of Gray Hawks included an adult in Ft. Davis June 6 (KB) and two immatures at Big Bend's Santa Elena Canyon July 19 (MAd). Just as last year, a nesting pair of Com. Black-Hawks at Big Bend's Rio Grande Village was not successful (MFl et al.) but a pair in *Tom Green* raised one young (TM). Two or three nesting pairs of Broad-winged Hawks were noted in the Austin area, a bit more than typically found on the edge of their breeding range (m.ob.). The Short-tailed Hawk from the spring at Santa Ana was reported as late as June 30 (TB). A Zone-tailed Hawk June 6 in n. *Hidalgo* (ph., TU) was out-of-place. Three active Aplomado Falcon nests were observed in the Brownsville area; all six adults were banded birds from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service/Peregrine Fund hacking program (*fide* BMC). A Prairie Falcon was an unforeseen find on the Rita Blanca National Grasslands, *Dallam*, June 14 (KS). Single Peregrine Falcons away from breeding areas were noted at *Karnes* June 5 (WS), Waco June 28 (*fide* EGW), and L. Balmorhea, *Reeves*, June 28 (MAd). The Big Bend population fledged only three, a significant drop from last year's 17 fledglings.

QUAILS TO SHOREBIRDS

Dry years are hard on quail, and with the impact of fire ants, N. Bobwhites seemed to have a very bad season in parts of c. Texas. A King Rail was again found in marshes at L. Meredith, *Hutchinson*, July 7 (KS). Discovery of 105 nests of Snowy Plovers at saline lakes (primarily in the s. half of the Panhandle and on Red R., *Childress*) was very gratifying (WC, as part of an ongoing Texas Tech Univ./TPWD shorebird study). A count of 229 Wilson's Plovers on San Jose I., *Aransas*, July 14 was excellent (TA). Another good shorebird count was 37 Black-necked Stilts at Imperial Res., *Pecos*, July 11 (MAd). One–three Am. Avocets at S.S.W.T.P. in mid-June (BSt, MWh) and one at Cooper L. June 15 (MWh) were unseasonable. Among the interesting "summer" shorebird records (which are often hard to describe as late, early, or lingerers)

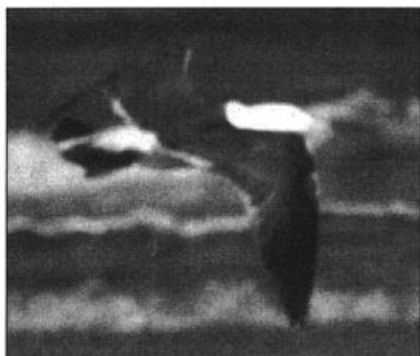


It was an exceptional summer for shorebirds bridging the gap between spring and autumn migration. These Marbled Godwits at Lake Balmorhea, Reeves County, Texas, on June 18, 1998, were the first in summer for West Texas. Photograph/Greg Lasley

were one Solitary Sandpiper at Austin June 13 (BFR); three Willets at Hagerman June 11 (WM, KaH); an Upland Sandpiper at Cooper L. June 30–July 1 (MWh); two Long-billed Curlews at L. Balmorhea June 18 (ph. GL, RW); a Sanderling at Cactus L., *Moore*, July 17 (KS); two Stilt Sandpipers at Corpus Christi July 12 (M&AC); four Long-billed Dowitchers at Cactus L. June 27 (EK); a Com. Snipe at Cooper L., *Delta*, July 26 (M&KWh); a Red-necked Phalarope at Cooper L. July 18–20 (ph., M&KWh); and 27 Wilson's Phalaropes near Utley, *Bastrop*, June 27 (BFR). Eight Marbled Godwits at L. Balmorhea June 18 (ph., GL, RW) provided the first documented summer record for the Trans-Pecos; at least one remained into July (KB). Another Marbled was at Imperial Res. July 11 (MAd). We had 2 confirmed nesting records for Spotted Sandpipers: a juvenile was at the Sanford Dam marshes, L. Meredith, *Hutchinson*, July 7 (KS), and an adult with flightless young were found in *Coke* (AKa). Equally exciting was an ad. Wilson's Phalarope with two young in *Carson* (WC, Texas Tech./TPWD). Both of the latter species are extremely rare nesters in Texas. An odd Am. Woodcock spent the period at Victoria (JDa).

JAEGERS AND TERNS

Rare, but not unexpected, single Pomarine Jaegers were found along the coast June 2 at Padre I., *Kenedy* (BSa), and June 10 at the mouth of the San Bernard R., *Brazoria* (R&KL). An ad. Laughing Gull was at McNary June 13+ (ph., JPa, BZ), a rare Trans-Pecos record. There were a smattering of late, lingering Franklin's Gulls dis-



The western Gulf Coast is becoming a nightmarish place for those who are saving gulls for their old age. This is especially so for the larger dark-backed gulls. Several identifications were proposed for this gull at Surfside, Brazoria County, Texas, on July 9, 1998. Perhaps most plausible given its two-year maturation is Yellow-footed Gull, thus explaining the tail band with a single newly molted rectrix, outer primary pattern, and the dark smudge on the culmen. Another troubling identification put forward was Herring × Kelp Gull which was all too possible, see the Central Southern regional report. Photograph/Ron Weeks.

persed over Texas, the latest a bird in *Hudspeth* June 27 (MAd). A 2nd-year California Gull was at Ft. Hancock, *Hudspeth*, July 1 (†JPa); presumably the same bird was at Tornillo Res. July 14.

Weeks photographed an interesting dark-backed gull at Surfside, *Brazoria*, July 6–Aug. 7. Photos posted on the Internet stirred great debate by experts worldwide. Identification suggestions included Yellow-footed Gull (which would be a first Texas record), Kelp × Herring hybrid, and an odd Lesser Black-backed, among others. As of this writing we are still not certain of this bird's identity.

A ratty-looking first-summer Great Black-backed Gull was at Lubbock June 28–July 2 (ph., †CSt, JH, m.ob); this is only the 3rd summer record for Texas. Unusual inland, a Royal Tern was at L. Tawakoni June 23–July 11 (ph., M&KWh, RK, MG). It's gratifying to see increasing summer reports of Least Terns in the Trans-Pecos and Panhandle. Numbers were reported at Ft. Hancock, Imperial Res., and on the Canadian and Red rivers (m.ob.). Nesting colonies were located at the latter 2 locations. Elsewhere, nesting Least Terns were noted at new sites at Twin Buttes Res., *Tom Green* (fide TM); S.S.W.T.P.; and Cooper L., *Delta* (m.ob.). The July 20 pelagic off Freeport tallied 60 Sooty Terns. Following the spring reports of noddies on the coast, another **Brown Noddy** was photographed on Padre I., *Kenedy*, June 19 & 24 († ph., BSa), while remarkably a **Black Noddy** was photographed on the jetty at San Jose I., *Aransas*, July 27 († ph., CMc). A Black Skimmer at V.C.D.B. June 21 provided a 2nd *Tarrant* record (MR, JWS et al.), while one at Cooper L. June 27 (ph., MWh) fur-

nished a first *Delta* record. The presence of these birds in n.e. Texas in the absence of a tropical storm is curious.

DOVES TO WOODPECKERS

A great find was a Band-tailed Pigeon in Lubbock June 10 (JCl); there are 3 previous summer records for the High Plains/ Panhandle area. New county records were provided by White-winged Doves in *Lipscomb* June 10 (A&FS), and in *Hockley* June 22–25 (LeS). An influx of Com. Ground-Doves was seen n. of their normal range in c. Texas by early June; singing birds were fairly routine at Balcones Canyonlands (CS) and a single bird was in Midland July 26 (D&AKe). There were 2 more reports of Com. Ground-Doves in *Hudspeth* June 3 and July 7 (JS, JF, BZ), where they are locally rare. Very late was a Black-billed Cuckoo June 7 at San Bernard, *Brazoria* (R&KL). Somewhat surprising were three Groove-billed Anis at Big Bend's Rio Grande Village July 27 (ph., BZ, VE, m.ob.). Another Groove-billed Ani at Kerrville, *Kerr*, July 31 (ph., KWl) provided a first county record. A Com. Pauraque along the *Karnes/Wilson* line throughout June was n. of where expected (WS). Two Lesser Nighthawks in *Hamilton* during June (EGW) were n. of their typical range. Chimney Swifts were reported in the L.R.G.V. and at Ft. Davis in areas where they had not previously nested (TB, KB).

This summer's Green Violet-ear reports included one at Comfort, *Kendall*, June 24 († ES) and another in Center Pt., *Kerr*, July 15–21 (†C&CO, SWie). The Broad-billed Hummingbird in Ft. Davis lingered until July 10 (KB). A Buff-bellied Hummingbird visited a Chappell Hill, *Washington*, feeder

May 14 through at least July 27 (ph., MEF) providing the first inland e.c. Texas record. Well out-of-range was a Blue-throated Hummingbird in Elgin, *Bastrop*, July 30 (MeB, fide BFr). A Calliope Hummingbird was observed in Amarillo, *Randall*, July 21–22 (RSc) and another was in Canyon, *Randall*, July 29–30 (A&MS, TF). A very late Broad-tailed Hummingbird for the Panhandle was in Amarillo June 9 (RSc).

Red-cockaded Woodpeckers are sometimes found on private land in Texas, but it is very exceptional; the species was detected in *Montgomery* June 8 and in *Newton* June 10 (RM). On state-owned property, the species was still found at the Huntsville State Fish Hatchery, *Walker*, July 24 (RM).

FLYCATCHERS TO SWALLOWS

A singing **Greater Pewee** was documented with photographs and tape recordings in the high Davis Mts. June 21–24 (†GL, JKa, KB, RW et al.); because the bird was singing so persistently and moved over a very large area, we think it was unmated. Two W. Wood-Pewees, notorious for lingering in the Panhandle, were singing in *Dallam* June 14 (KS). Late *Empidonax* flycatchers at Quintana, *Brazoria*, included a Yellow-bellied and a Willow, both seen and heard June 6 & 7 (J&WRi), while a Yellow-bellied and an Alder were at Colorado Bend, *San Saba*, June 4 (ML). In their only known Texas breeding locations, singing Gray Flycatchers were noted in the Davis Mts. June 20–24 (JKa, KB, GL, RW). A Black Phoebe in *Midland* July 26 provided a first July county record (DKe). In the same location where the Greater Pewee was found, up to four Dusky-capped Flycatchers were photographed and tape recorded June 21–24 for about the 10th or 11th documented Texas record (†KB, JKa, GL, RW). Out-of-range was a Great Crested Flycatcher in Lubbock June 10 (JH), as was a Brown-crested in *Brazoria* June 6 (DVe, RWe, ph., MG). In the Trans-Pecos, a Brown-crested Flycatcher at Indian Hot Springs, *Hudspeth*, July 7 provided a first county record (BZ). Up to four Tropical Kingbirds remained at Big Bend's Cottonwood Campground through the season. Tropical Kingbirds nested in Rancho Viejo and Harlingen, *Cameron* (BMc et al.). Two– three Couch's Kingbirds were reported at Mitchell L. June 6–9 (GSc) and a Tropical/Couch's Kingbird was in *Jefferson* July 5 (JWh). A Cassin's Kingbird in *Texline*, *Dallam*, June 14 (KS) was one of few summer reports for the Panhandle; Seyffert found the species to be unusually common on a Breeding Bird Survey route in nearby

n.e. New Mexico the previous day. Even more unexpected were four Cassin's Kingbirds near Hueco Tanks June 12 (SW). Loggerhead Shrikes were particularly sparse in n.e. Texas in areas where they were fairly easy to locate only a few years ago; the drought may have played a role.

Bell's Vireo has almost disappeared as a breeding species in the Panhandle, so one singing June 6 in *Hemphill* furnished a good find (KS). Drought conditions in c. and w. Texas played hard on the nesting success of the endangered Black-capped Vireo. The dry conditions in Big Bend apparently inhibited egg-laying (*fide* MF) and relatively few young were raised at well-surveyed colonies at Kickapoo and Balcones Canyonlands (DStu, CS). This offset an increase in the number of territorial birds which resulted from last year's production.

Away from its known nesting area, a Warbling Vireo in *Hartley* July 11 (PT et al.) was noteworthy. Elsewhere, we received a remarkable report of Warbling Vireo nesting in *Johnson* at L. Pat Cleburne (CE), providing not only a first county record but a very rare nesting record for that area of Texas. Following up on last spring's flurry of reports, Yellow-green Vireos again made news. One-two Yellow-greens were at Quintana, *Brazoria*, June 1-7 (†RWe et al.), and a 3rd was at another nearby location June 5-10 (†J&WRi). Closer to their expected range, one was heard at Santa Ana July 15 (TB) and another was near Harlingen July 26 (†OC). In Big Bend, yet another Yellow-green Vireo was at Dugout Wells June 7 (†MF).

Fish Crows were seen on the Sulphur R. w. to Cooper L., *Delta* (MWh), but the numbers were down from the last 2-3 years. By late July, large Purple Martin roosts had begun to build up in c. Texas; at Waco 25,000+ were at one site (EGW, KK) and a roost in Austin had 30,000+ (AD et al.). Add Cooper L. to the short list of localities where Tree Swallows nest in Texas; after 4 years of summer records they were finally confirmed with young (MWh). A flock of 5000+ Bank Swallows near Harlingen July 26 was noteworthy in number and early date. Several Cave Swallow nesting locations were noted in both *Brazos* and *Brazoria*, there were first breeding records for *Montague* and *Wise* (RG), and a Cave Swallow in *Throckmorton* June 6 (RR) provided a first county record.

NUTHATCHES TO WARBLERS

A White-breasted Nuthatch reported July 9 at Webberville, *Travis* (BFR), had been



Presumably a non-breeding wanderer was this Wood Thrush well west of normal breeding and migratory territory at Lake Balmorhea in West Texas on June 18, 1998. This was the first ever found in this part of the state in summer.
Photograph/Greg Lasley

around for several seasons, but one at Volente July 23 was inexplicable (AD). A Carolina Wren at Zimmer's yard in El Paso July 21 represented a 3rd county record and the first for summer (ph. BZ). An early southbound migrant was a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Aransas Pass July 30 (E&NA). Two pairs of Black-tailed Gnatcatchers nested at Kickapoo (DStu, KB), establishing a first breeding record for the Edwards Plateau. One-two Swainson's Thrushes lingered at Balmorhea S.P. until June 17 (TJ), while a Wood Thrush there June 18 (ph. GL, RW) provided the latest ever "spring" record for the Trans-Pecos, well w. of their usual migration route. Clay-colored Robins were reported all season at McAllen and Anzalduas (m.ob.). There were 3 curious summer Phainopepla records: June 10 and July 4 at 2 locations in *Midland* (JMe, GG) and another bird in *Edwards* July 22 (SS).

Two Texas specialties, the Colima and Golden-cheeked warblers, apparently had poor nesting seasons due to the drought; most individuals of both species had departed their breeding grounds by late in the season (MF, GL, CS, ML, m.ob.). As with shorebirds, we had a smattering of late northbound warblers as follows: a N. Parula well to the west in *Crosby* July 1 (RLo), a Yellow Warbler in Lubbock June 10 (JCI), single Chestnut-sideds in Kerrville June 3 & 4 (LR), a Cape May in *Brazoria* June 5-7 (J&WRi), a handful of Am. Redstarts and Ovenbirds at coastal and c. Texas locations (m.ob.), a Mourning Warbler out-of-range

in Ft. Davis June 1 (ph. GP), a MacGillivray's near Canyon June 4-14 (I&WD), a Hooded Warbler w. of Austin June 23 (*fide* AD), and a Canada Warbler at Bentsen June 4 (TB). Northern Parula continued to show signs of a range expansion in n.e. Texas; they probably nested along the Sabine R. below L. Tawakoni for the first time (RK, MWh). Following last year's Pine Warbler invasion, a pair remained to nest in *Grayson* for a first breeding record there (WM). In n.e. Texas, Com. Yellowthroats and Yellow-breasted Chats had a successful season, while Black-and-white and Kentucky warblers were nearly absent by early June.

A silent male MacGillivray's Warbler observed at 8200 ft. near the summit of Mt. Livermore in the Davis Mts. June 24 (KB, GL, RW) was a surprise. The species is not known to nest in Texas; however, this is the 2nd observation of MacGillivray's in suitable habitat during midsummer in this area. Probably symptomatic of the poor nesting season, a wandering Golden-cheeked Warbler showed up off the Edwards Plateau in *Bastrop* June 3 (BFR). Another indicator of the early exodus of breeding species in drought-stricken areas were reports of Black-and-white Warblers in s. Texas in mid-July (HB, m.ob.), and an amazing report of an individual in s. Veracruz, Mexico, July 13 (CG, PS). Probably out of its breeding range was a presumed southbound Am. Redstart in College Station, *Brazos*, July 17 (EIR).

TANAGERS TO FINCHES

There were 2 records of Summer Tanagers away from breeding areas; one in Palo Duro Canyon June 12 (BiMc, RSc), and another in McAllen June 22 (TB). Hepatic Tanager is known as a breeding bird in Texas only in the mountains of the Trans-Pecos. Thus, an ad. male Hepatic banded and photographed at Devil's River State Natural Area, *Val Verde*, June 20 was out-of-place (RD, BO). Remarkably, the male was accompanied by a female and two streaked juveniles. This site is a few thousand ft. lower in elevation and at least 60 mi n.e. of the nearest known breeding areas in Mexico.

A male White-collared Seedeater seen at Santa Ana June 30 and July 15 was evidently of the w. Mexico race *S. t. torqueola*, quite distinct in plumage from the n.e. Mexico *sharpei* race (TB). We are aware of 2 additional photographed records of this race in *Hidalgo* and *El Paso*; the origin of these birds is unknown. The Botteri's Sparrows found breeding in *Presidio* last year did not

show up this year (MAD). There were indications in *Travis* and *Johnson* of a drift of breeding Cassin's Sparrows e. of their normal range, as expected in dry years (CE, CS, GL) A Black-throated Sparrow near Lorenzo, *Crosby*, July 1 (RLo) may also have been a similar indicator of drought-induced movements. A Vesper Sparrow in the Panhandle in *Hartley* July 11 (EK et al.) was early (or late?).

Two Dark-eyed Juncos lingering in the Davis Mts. in late June were puzzling: an "Oregon" June 20 (KB, JKA, GL, RW) and a "Gray-headed" June 21 (D&LH). The nearest breeding station for the latter race is in the Guadalupe Mts., 90 mi to the north. An imm grosbeak July 7 at Palo Duro (EK et al) was identified as a Rose-breasted, but it is not clear which species would be more expected at that date and location, and the identification of imm. Black-headed/Rose-breasted Grosbeaks can be tricky. Elsewhere, there were 3 reports of Black-headed away from breeding areas: one at Inks L., *Burnet*, June 17 (*fide* AD), one in Lampasas July 24-25 (DHo), and another in Midland July 26 (D&AKe).

Williams said that Bronzed Cowbird numbers had tripled or quadrupled in the Midland area this summer; both Bullock's and Orchard Orioles were observed feeding fledgling cowbirds. Quite remarkable was a "**Fuerte's**" Orchard Oriole (*Icterus spurius fuertesi*) in Arroyo City, *Cameron*, present since April, but not identified until June 15; the bird remained until at least July 11 (ph., † KBau, BMc, JA, LM et al.). This represents only the 2nd documented record of this Mexican subspecies for Texas; its regular range reaches s. Tamaulipas. A pair of Hooded Orioles feeding young at Mitchell L (BDo et al.) June 27 was a nice find.

A Red Crossbill near Merkel, *Taylor*, July 8 (*fide* LB) was very interesting since the species nested in nearby Abilene last summer. Perhaps a final stray related to the drought conditions was a Lesser Goldfinch at Rita Blanca L., *Hartley*, July 11 (LSa).

ADDENDUM

We recently became aware of the existence of a **Jabiru** specimen in the collection of Univ of Texas-Pan American, Edinburg; the bird was found dead in *Hidalgo* in September 1972 and saved as a skeleton. This will give us a total of 7 accepted Texas records. We received a late, well-documented report of an imm. **Snail Kite** from private property in *Hidalgo* († ph., WSh, BRo) May 17-29, 1998. Although this stunning find could not be shared with the birding

public, the excellent photos obtained will provide Texas with only its 2nd documented record. We also received a late report of an apparent Tropical Parula May 13 near Buffalo Gap, *Taylor* († TE); there have been a few recent records of this species in the s. Hill Country, but this is yet another 160 mi farther north.

Cited Observers (subregional editors in boldface):

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Place names that are frequently mentioned, but very long, may be abbreviated in a form such as "C.B.B.T." or "W.P.B.O." Such local abbreviations will be explained in a key at the beginning of the particular regional report in which they are used. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *Field Notes* are keyed on page 428.