

texas region

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Happily, much of Texas had a mild summer with little of the environmental harshness we normally associate with the season. Throughout all parts of the state moisture was not a problem, and food resources were at least sufficient or even quite abundant. The timing of rains prompted song activity well into July by species such as Painted Bunting, which normally quiet down by then. Production of young was almost universally cited as good. However, for complex reasons (mainly the late and very dry start to the nesting season in April–May), productivity in the Trans-Pecos was poor for most species except those in moister, higher-elevation habitats. Conditions began to dry out and heat up rapidly in east, central, and south Texas by early July; we attribute the early southbound dispersal of such species as Golden-cheeked and Black-and-white warblers to environmental cues on the breeding grounds resulting from these conditions. Not until after the close of the summer season would any tropical weather influence parts of the state.

Our coverage was pretty good for a summer season, but we are still seeing gaps in reporting in the South Plains and in north-central Texas, both areas where we know there are at least a few active observers.

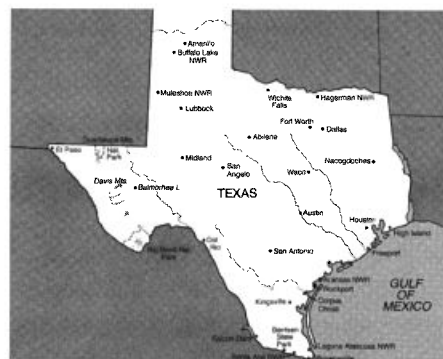
Abbreviations: Ft. Bliss (*Ft. Bliss sewage ponds, El Paso*); L.R.G.V. (*Lower Rio Grande Valley*); T.B.R.C. (*Texas Bird Records Committee/Texas Ornithological Society*); U.T.C. (*Upper Texas Coast*). Aransas, Anzalduas, Balcones Canyonlands, Big Bend, Brazoria, Buffalo L., Colorado Bend, Kickapoo Caverns, San Bernard, and Santa Ana are shortened names for the respective county, state, or national parks, wildlife refuges, etc.

LOONS THROUGH RAPTORS

Unusual for summer were single Com. Loons at L. Athens, *Henderson*, 12 Jun (K&KBe) and in *Cameron* 4 Jul (BMc).

Continuing a trend noted last spring, Least Grebes again nested e. of their normal range with a pair and three young at Brazoria N.W.R. 22–29 Jul (MLa). Two W. Grebes in *Randall* 1–3 Jun (LSa) provided an unusual Panhandle summer record. Off Freeport, a Leach's Storm-Petrel was well-described 6 Jun (PH) along with three Band-rumpeds, and up to 34 Band-rumpeds were counted 21 Jun (m.ob.). A total of four Masked Boobies were counted on the above 2 pelagic trips off Freeport. Up to 12 Am. White Pelicans summered at Buffalo L., *Randall* (m.ob.), for a rare Panhandle summer record. The nesting colony of Double-crested Cormorants at Palo Duro L., *Hansford*, increased to 15 nests (*fide* KS); unexpected was a single Double-crested on L. Amistad 21 Jul (SS). Up to 300 Neotropic Cormorant nests at L. Fork, *Wood* (K&MWh), provided a seasonal high count for the e. third of the state.

A pair of Great Egrets at the Rio Bosque Preserve, *El Paso*, provided the first nesting record in that area since 1938 (JSp). As mentioned last fall, Buffalo L., *Randall*, had water for the first time in 20 years, providing habitat for 61 Cattle Egret, 3 Snowy Egret, 60 Black-crowned Night-Heron, and 20 White-faced Ibis nests (KS, BHo); the Snowy nests were a first for the Panhandle (*fide* KS). Of the above, all but Snowy Egret also nested at Palo Duro L., *Hansford*. Out-of-place Little Blue Herons included single birds 16–17 Jun in *Carson* (MK, MS) and all season at McNary Res., *Hudspeth* (m.ob.). Also of interest was a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at El Paso 17 Jun (JSp). White Ibises nested inland to *Washington* (DVo). Single Glossy Ibises were in *Nueces* 19 Jun and 4 Jul (A&MC). Ten White-faced Ibises on the Brazos R., *Washington*, 1 Jun (DVo) provided the first June record for that area. Roseate Spoonbill had not been reported in the Panhandle since 1958, so the two that dropped in on Greenbelt L., *Donley*, 17 Jul (H&JO) were quite unexpected. Notable for June, a count of 348 Wood Storks over *DeWitt* 23 Jun surprised Muschalek. Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks continued to expand into n.e. Texas with one at Cooper L., *Delta*, 7 Jul (MWh) and five at L. Fork 15 Jun (K&MWh). Six Blue-winged Teals and ten N. Pintails at Ft. Davis 11 Jul were probably early migrants (KB et al.). A female



SA Terry Maxwell reports that Com. Black-Hawks were back on the S. Concho R., *Tom Green*, this summer. He did not find an actual nest, since the nest that was used for the past 3 years was abandoned this year. He did see the Black-Hawks at their favorite fishing hole below a rock dam on the river. Maxwell goes on to say that “the significance of this event is quite remarkable. The only reported consistent year-to-year nesting by this species in Texas has been in the Davis Mts. Other nests have been located, but consistent success outside the Davis Mts. has not been documented. We suspect presence in *Tom Green* since 1993, and we have confirmed successful nesting from 1996 through 1998 and continued presence in 1999.” Interestingly, the nesting pair of Com. Black-Hawks at Big Bend’s Rio Grande Village fledged young this summer (*fide* MF) for a first successful nesting at that location.

Red-breasted Merganser summered at L. Balmorhea (TJ et al.).

A summer vagrant in the Panhandle, an Osprey was at Buffalo L. 6 Jun (DLe, BL, PT). Elsewhere, two Ospreys at Cooper L. 29 Jun (MWh) provided the first local June record. The orange Swallow-tailed Kite nest from the spring fledged two young in June (*fide* CSh). Williams speculated that the spring drought conditions in Midland resulted in low numbers of Mississippi Kites in that area. While Gray Hawks were fairly conspicuous in the L.R.G.V., the species was not seen in Big Bend this season, and one in the Davis Mts. 17 Jun (RW) was very surprising. Well to the north of the species known range, a Zone-tailed Hawk was in *Parker* 2 Jun (CB). A report of a Merlin near Wichita Falls 8 & 11 Jun (TK) was very surprising. Only three young Peregrine Falcons fledged in the Big Bend area, a production far below normal. Unexpected records of summer Peregrines

included single birds at Chapeno, *Starr*, 11 Jun, Davis Mts. 17 Jun (RW), and *Brazoria* 26 Jun (WPr).

RAILS THROUGH SKIMMER

Evidence of the breeding population of Black Rails on the c. coast was provided by eight birds noted in *Calhoun* 4 Jul (BF). Unusual for e. Texas was a Purple Gallinule at Gus Engling W.M.A., *Anderson*, 27 June (J&DQ, SC); another all season at Mitchell L., *Bexar*, was unexpected. Late Am. Golden-Plovers were at *Brazoria* 17–18 Jun (RWe, TC) and Hornsby Bend, Austin, 28 Jun–1 Jul (AD, BF); another unexpectedly early 16 Jul at Ft. Bliss (BZ) provided *El Paso* with its 5th record. New nesting locations for Snowy Plovers were discovered at O C Fisher L., *Tom Green* (TM, AK), and in *Wichita* (TK, CD, WH). Two Piping Plovers made an appearance at Longview, *Harrison*, 22–23 Jul (GLu). Willets were unusually common at most reservoirs in the Trans-Pecos during July. Rains in early July on the prairies s. of Ft. Davis produced small ponds that provided shorebird habitat where there usually is none. One of these small ponds had five Willets, three Black Terns, two Baird's Sandpipers, three Wilson's Phalaropes, 50 Stilt Sandpipers, and numerous yellowlegs of both species on 11 Jul (KB, D&LH, MA)—all-in-all a rare occurrence for a county with few surface impoundments. Well outside of expected dates was a Red-necked Phalarope at Cooper L., *Delta*, 6 Jul (MWh). Other notable shorebirds (early or late) included an Upland Sandpiper on the *Hunt/Delta* line 13 Jun (MWh) and six Buff-breasted Sandpipers 4 Jul in *Calhoun* (BFr) and another in *Waco* 6 Jul (EGW).

A Pomarine Jaeger was found on the beach on Padre I., *Kenedy*, 3 Jun (BSa). In 1995 we reported the first inland record of nesting Laughing Gulls in Texas at L. Amistad, *Val Verde*. A 21 Jul survey of islands on that lake tallied 25 Laughing Gulls with 3 active nests, over 100 Least Terns, including many juveniles, and a flock of Forster's Terns. Further observations revealed an active Forster's Tern nest, the first for this area (SS, DLa). Unexpected was a carefully identified Com. Tern among several Forster's at L. Tawakoni 9–12 Jun (MWh). Three Forster's Terns summered at Buffalo L. (*vide* KS). Thirty-five nesting Least Terns were good numbers at both L. Texoma and Cooper L. in e. Texas (MWh); elsewhere, about ten pairs of Least Terns nested at O. C. Fisher L. (TM, AK). A single Bridled Tern was seen off Freeport 6 Jun (PH) while six

more were noted in the same general area 21 Jun (m.ob.). At least two pairs of Sooty Terns were reported nesting from *Nueces* and *Aransas* locations (*vide* MC); this species is a rare and very local nester on spoil islands on the c. and lower Texas coast. Single Black Skimmers appeared at Austin 17 Jul (LK, BF, ML) and Richand Creek W.M.A., *Navarro/Freestone* 18 Jul (TPo, DHA); inland records of skimmers in Texas are usually associated with tropical storms, but such was not the case with these records.

DOVES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Eurasian Collared-Doves, as expected, continued to waltz across Texas with records now statewide; the species is now present in virtually every town along the upper and c. coast. For several years we have commented on the expanding population of White-winged Doves into c. Texas. A vivid example of the explosion is a report from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Dept. indicating that the largest population of the species in the state—with over 400,000 birds—is now in San Antonio. Common Ground-Doves continued to increase at Balcones Canyonlands near Austin, with as many as eighteen calling birds through the season (JKe, BRc, CS). Written descriptions were submitted of a heard-only Buff-collared Nightjar in the Davis Mts. 12 Jun (GHo, GK, JC, †T.B.R.C.), but the vocalizations were not heard on subsequent days despite effort by other observers. There are no Texas records of this species, but a report from the Sierra Picachos of Nuevo Leon, Mexico, about 70 mi s. of Laredo, TX, is well-documented.

A nestling Chimney Swift found in McAllen 12 Jun (TBr) finally provided evidence of nesting from the L.R.G.V.; other records from that region included an adult at Rancho Viejo 14 Jun and a pair at Brownsville 20 Jun (BMc). Green Violet-ears showed up in *Hunt*, *Kerr*, 28 Jun (†PaH), in *Volente*, *Travis*, 17 Jul (†BSt), and in *Graford*, *Palo Pinto*, 28–29 Jun (†J&IMe)—but none stayed long enough to be seen by many observers. If these reports are accepted, it would bring the total number of Texas records of Green Violet-ear to 30. This has been a most remarkable year for Broad-billed Hummingbirds in Texas. Two of the four birds in the Davis Mts. from the spring report lingered into summer, and we added four more Broad-billeds this season: a male at Big Bend's Panther Junction 10 Jun (†MF), a male at a feeder in Knickerbocker, *Tom Green*, present for a week before being banded 11 Jun (ph., RoD), a female in the

Chisos Basin at Big Bend 14 Jul (†BZ), and a female at Kickapoo Caverns 24 Jul (†MiL). A report of a White-eared Hummingbird 25 Jun at Big Bend will be reviewed by the T.B.R.C.; the report may not eliminate a female Broad-billed Hummingbird. The out-of-range spring Buff-bellied Hummingbirds from *Washington* and *Gonzales* lingered through the summer; another individual was found at yet another *Gonzales* location 26 Jun by Freeman. A report of a **Violet-crowned Hummingbird** in the Davis Mts. 29 Jul (†MKI) will be reviewed by the T.B.R.C.; if accepted this would represent the 6th for Texas. A Ringed Kingfisher in *Fredricksburg*, *Gillespie*, 30 Jul (BF) was the only kingfisher of note. A Red-headed Woodpecker in *Midland* 11 Jul provided the first summer record for that w. location (DK). Two Pileated Woodpeckers over *Ingram*, *Kerr*, 28 Jul (A&HR) provided only the 4th Hill Country record.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH SWALLOWS

Early summer reports of W. Wood-Pewees in the Panhandle are becoming an annual event; this year two were found in *Oldham* 1 Jun (KS), and two others were at *Rita Blanca L.*, *Hartley*, 10 Jun (m.ob.). A Least Flycatcher in *Bell* 16 Jul (RPi) was on the early edge of the species' normal south-bound migration. Dusky Flycatcher has long been suspected to be a rare breeder in w. Texas mountains, but conclusive evidence is still lacking. This season a pair of Dusks photographed and tape-recorded near the top of Mt. Livermore in the Davis Mts. 15 Jun (KB, MEa) strongly suggested breeding. Further investigations 4 Jul revealed at least five Dusks in the same area, and at least one pair remained through the season (BF, PH).

A pair of Black Phoebes present all season at *Anzalduas*, *Hidalgo* (TBr, m.ob.), apparently provided a first nesting record for the L.R.G.V.; a juvenile was observed 13 Jul (CCo). Also unexpected, a Black Phoebe surprised *Brown* in *Lee* 1 Jun. An occupied E. Phoebe nest at L. Marvin, *Hemphill*, 23 Jun (HS) was the first nesting reported in the Panhandle region away from the cap-rock; another E. Phoebe was at *Buffalo L.* 4 Jul (KS), but no evidence of nesting was found. Up to three Dusky-capped Flycatchers documented 27 Jun–4 Jul (KB, JK, et al.) provided further evidence that this species is a rare summer resident and possible (but as yet unconfirmed) nester in the high Davis Mts. Brown-crested Flycatchers were found again found at Big Bend, with pairs



A bulky and conspicuous Rose-throated Becard nest, under construction on 26 June in Anzalduas Park, Hidalgo County, is typical of the species. Some have been recorded as long as 30 inches; the entrance will be at or near the bottom. This first nesting in Texas in more than twenty years was unfortunately not successful. Photograph/Mark Lockwood

at Rio Grande Village and Cottonwood Campground (MF, m.ob.); however, evi-

SA In the 1990s, the Davis Mts. have produced a series of very important Texas records. The latest was the state's first documented **Buff-breasted Flycatcher**, present 3–7 May (details in *NAB* 53: 301). On 14 Jun another (or perhaps the same) Buff-breasted male was discovered not far from the site of the original observation (KB, JK, RW, GL). Further investigation revealed a female and a nest under construction, obviously a first nesting record for Texas (see the Pictorial Highlights). Bryan discovered and photographed two recently-fledged young on 31 Jul and thus confirmed successful breeding. The coincidence of two birds showing up at this location seems very unlikely and suggests the presence of a sparse but previously undiscovered breeding population.

dence of nesting was not reported for this species either. Elsewhere, an out-of-range Brown-crested was video-taped on Galveston I. 15–17 Jun (JSt). Also a surprise, a Great Kiskadee was in *Calhoun* 10 Jul (BF). Couch's Kingbirds typically breed along the Rio Grande west to Del Rio; farther west, up to three Couch's were in Sanderson, *Terrill*, during June (PW) for a first area record. The Tropical Kingbirds reported in spring at Big Bend's Cottonwood Campground fledged young by 10 Jul; apparently two pairs were present. Another pair of Tropical Kingbirds located near Marathon, *Brewster*, 5 Jul (MF) fledged four young 19 Jul (CS) for a first record of the species in the Trans-Pecos away from Big Bend. The Anzalduas Rose-throated Becards abandoned 2 nesting attempts in June and July (TBr, m.ob.); the pair was again gathering nesting material 24 Jul.

Westerly White-eyed Vireos were at Big Bend's Rio Grande Village 6 Jun (MF) and Imperial Res., *Pecos*, 30 Jul (PH, BF). A singing Bell's Vireo in *Cass* 4 Jun (JIn) was considered a rarity in that n.e. Texas location,

and two in *Milam* 12 Jun (BF) were similarly unexpected. A singing Red-eyed Vireo found in Ponderosa Pine woodland in the Davis Mts. 14 Jun (†KB, JK et al.) was interesting as the species is not known to nest in Texas w. of the Pecos R. A Yellow-green Vireo, detected at Santa Ana 16–17 Jun (TBr et al.), was evidently not relocated. Several massive Purple Martin roosts were located late in the season, with numbers of 10,000 at Waco 1 Jul (EGW) and an amazing 100,000 birds near Tyler, *Smith*, in early July (TxB). Tree Swallows made news this season when a 2nd documented Panhandle nest fledged young 21 Jun in *Hemphill* (JRa, MS) and an estimated 100 pairs nested at Cooper L., *Delta* (MWh). A pair of Tree Swallows also bred at Big Creek L., *Delta*, where nesting for the species was first documented in Texas in 1991; yet another pair was at L. Tawakoni in June, but nesting evidence was not noted (RK). Mid-July reports of N. Rough-winged and Cave swallows were noteworthy locally in the Brazos Valley (JW, KA). A Cave Swallow in *Hopkins* 29 Jun (MWh) was the first for that county.

NUTHATCHES THROUGH FINCHES

Paton was surprised to find a Red-breasted Nuthatch in his El Paso yard on the extremely early date of 31 Jul. A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Anzalduas 15 Jun was also odd (TBr), since the species is not a common nester in that area. A Townsend's Solitaire in *Mason* 5 Jun (PK) was most amazing. Following a Trans-Pecos record in summer 1998, a Wood Thrush was found near Alpine 24 Jun (GWi). Clay-colored Robins seemed to be fairly evident this season, with confirmed nesting (young observed) at Anzalduas and Santa Ana (m ob.). Late-lingering Cedar Waxwings were on Galveston I. 9-14 Jun (JSt).

A singing territorial male Colima Warbler found in the Davis Mts. 18 Jun (KB, GL, RW, MA, JK) was photographed and tape-recorded for the first documented record of a territorial Colima away from Big Bend; the bird was present through June, but neither a female nor a nest could be located. A pair of N. Parulas at Colorado Bend, *San Saba*, 2 Jun (ML) was at the edge of its expected breeding range. Tropical Parulas successfully nested at Anzalduas and apparently also nested at Santa Ana (TBr, SP). Due to the lush habitat conditions in the Hill Country, Golden-cheeked Warbler productivity at Balcones Canyonlands was very good (CS). An early southbound male Golden-cheeked reached the coast at Aransas 11 Jul, providing a first refuge record (†SSu, AT). A very late Blackpoll Warbler was on Galveston I. 24 Jun (JSt). An Am. Redstart in *Bastrop* 11 Jul was not expected (BF). A 3rd summer record of Ovenbird for the c. Brazos Valley was provided by a window-killed bird at Texas A&M University, College Station, 13 Jun (MM). A late N. Waterthrush was in Austin 6 Jun (*fide* AD). Lockwood (ph.) observed a Louisiana Waterthrush feeding young at Colorado Bend 2 Jun for a first nesting record in that area. A Com. Yellowthroat singing through July (DV) provided an apparent first summer record for *Washington* A **Gray-crowned Yellowthroat** present at Santa Ana 17-22 Jun (ph. TBr, tape SB, LM, SP) was only the 5th documented occurrence in recent decades. The only Painted Redstarts reported were two individuals in the Davis Mts. 15-16 Jun (KB, JKa et al.); it has been a decade since this bird has bred regularly in Big Bend. A Rufous-capped Warbler was banded 20 Jun along the Devil's R., *Val Verde* (†ph. BO et al) for the 15th accepted state record. A few Yellow-breasted Chats were singing on territory away from known breeding areas:

two were at San Bernard, *Brazoria*, in June and July (RWe, TC), and a 3rd bird was heard in *Hidalgo* 2 Jul (TBr).

Unexpected in the Panhandle was a Summer Tanager at Palo Duro L. 19 Jun (m.ob.). While migrant Lark Buntings typically arrive in w. Texas in late July and August, an alternate-plumaged male on the U.T.C. in *Brazoria* 20 Jul (WZ) was totally bizarre. Also noteworthy was a late Savannah Sparrow at Balcones Canyonlands, *Burnet*, 15 Jun (BRe). A late Rose-breasted Grosbeak was in San Marcos 2 Jun (*fide* AD). Single Black-headed Grosbeaks were noted at 2 w. *Bexar* locations 17 & 18 Jul (BD). The Lazuli Bunting reported in the spring from *Tarrant* appeared to be a hybrid with Indigo Bunting; the bird remained on a territory into July (m.ob.). The "Fuerte's" Orchard Oriole present last summer in *Cameron* returned again this season (KaB). Historically, Orchard Orioles were rare breeders in the c. Brazos Valley, but there was a sudden increase in reports this year with birds found in at least 5 locations (m.ob.). A rather late Am. Goldfinch was noted at San Bernard 15 Jun (RWe). Five to six Pine Siskins summered at Gruver, *Hansford*, providing a very rare summer record for the Panhandle (MT).

UNDOCUMENTED RARITIES

Reports of Leach's Storm-Petrel 21 Jun off Freeport and Blue-throated Hummingbird in Uvalde were received with no supporting documentation.

Cited observers (subregional editors in boldface):

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