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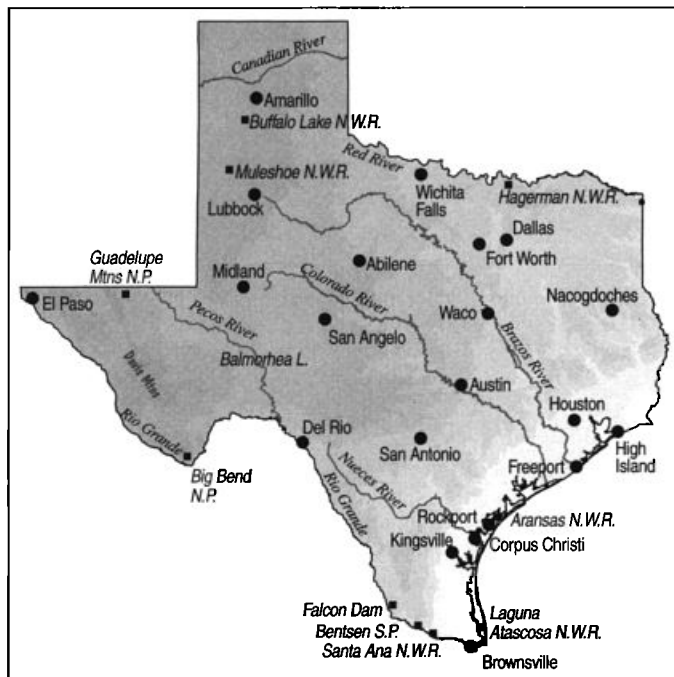
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# texas



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**A**lthough there were some local rains in south central Texas in early June and some brief monsoon-season moisture in the west Texas mountains, the more common story across the entire state was of brutally hot and dry conditions. Drying ponds and lakes were the norm; no tropical weather arrived to ameliorate the severe conditions. Those low water levels had a large negative impact on waterbirds on the coast but provided concentrated foraging

sites for large numbers of long-legged waders in the Panhandle. Reports of late northbound birds (both non-passerines and passerines) were well outnumbered by reports of early southbound migrants, and we suspect many of the latter were pushed out of nesting grounds by dry conditions beyond our boundaries. There were hints late in the season of significant post-breeding dispersal of waders inland in large numbers. Given the harsh—and worsening—conditions, it is all the more remarkable that we can report relatively positive nesting results for species of concern such as the Golden-cheeked Warbler, and no obvious serious losses among most species groups.

It is with profound sadness that we announce the death of Frances Williams in early September 2000. Frances was the Southern Great Plains editor for *American Birds* for many years when that region still included west and north Texas. Frances' help and guidance to all Texas observers over several decades is legendary, as was her insistence on the accuracy of reports. She will be dearly missed. This column is dedicated to her memory.

**Abbreviations:** L.R.G.V. (Lower Rio Grande Valley); S.S.W.T.P. (South Side Water Treatment)

Plant, *Dallas*); TBRC (Texas Bird Records Committee, Texas Ornithological Society); TPWD (Texas Parks & Wildlife Dept.); U.T.C. (Upper Texas Coast). The following are shortened names for the respective county, state, or national parks and wildlife refuges, etc.: Anahuac, Aransas, Balcones Canyonlands, Bentsen, Big Bend, Brazoria, Brazos Bend, Buffalo Lake, Dolan Falls, Guadalupe Mts., Hagerman, McFaddin, Packery Channel, Palo Duro Canyon, and Sabal Palms.

#### LOONS THROUGH FLAMINGO

Noteworthy were the one or two Common Loons that remained through the season at L. Tawakoni (EW). A pair of Least Grebes in *Washington* provided a first county record 14 Jun–8 Jul (DB, C&MB); the pair built a nest and laid eggs but later abandoned the attempt. A pair of Clark's Grebes successfully nested at McNary Res., *Hudspeth*, providing a 2nd nesting record for the state; Paton found 2 chicks on 2 June Welborn made 18 trips through the summer to offshore waters from Port Aransas and had an array of pelagics: Cory's Shearwaters were routine in June and early July, while Audubon's Shearwaters were more frequent in July, with a maximum of six individuals. The only organized pelagic trip of the season originated out of Port Isabel 14 Jul. Those observers tallied 70 Band-rumped Storm-Petrels, the most ever seen on a single Texas trip, but no other significant pelagic species were noted (BMc). An additional 7 Band-rumpeds were tallied by Welborn in July off *Nueces*, while a single bird was reported in Aransas Bay 6 Jul (RF). Quite rare in summer, two imm. Northern Gannets were found beached at Quintana, *Brazoria*, 13 Jun and 27 Jul (DS). The best pelican report was of an imm. Brown Pelican at Lubbock 23–25 Jun (BRa, CSt). A possible imm. Neotropic Cormorant at Buffalo L., *Randall*, 15 Jun († BaP et al.) was described in detail by six observers; to date there are no photographed records from the Panhandle. Numbers of nesting Double-crested Cormorants in the Panhandle continued to increase; 21 nests were found at Palo Duro L., *Hansford*, and 13 more nests were at Buffalo Lake (KS, BH). Two pairs of Snowy Egrets nested again this year at Buffalo L. (KS) and a Little Blue Heron at L. Rita Blanca 29 Jul provided a first for *Hartley* (EK, m.ob.). Numbers of nesting Roseate Spoonbills on the U.T.C. were thought to be down by as much as 75% (*vide* WBu). To date the only nesting record of Glossy Ibis in Texas is

from 1997, however, 9 found near Indianola, *Calhoun*, 27 Jul (BrF) continue the trend of increasing summer reports. The largest number of Wood Storks reported during the season was 371 at Brazoria 15 Jul (WP). At least one of the **Greater Flamingoes** in *Aransas* reported in the spring was seen occasionally through at least 17 Jul (JW).

#### WATERFOWL THROUGH RAPTORS

A Muscovy Duck at Quemado, *Maverick*, 5 Jun (SS) exhibited wild plumage and behavior; this is well upriver from the known population in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Gadwall is a rare nester in the Panhandle, but a hen and three young were found 3 Jul at L. Meredith, *Hutchinson*, (KS) the same site where nesting was last observed in 1982. Small numbers of at least nine species of waterfowl summered in scattered locations statewide.

As a result of an ongoing study of Swallow-tailed Kites (TPWD), we are getting more reports from e. Texas: a pair of Swallow-taileds nested in Liberty behind the Wal-Mart during May and June (*vide* CSh, GSi). An imm. Mississippi Kite was an unusual find in San Antonio (KBa) 6 Jun. The only summer report of a Bald Eagle was in *Angelina* 7 Jul (LDe, GG, NBi). Two nests of Northern Harrier were successful in the Panhandle, one each in *Castro* and *Lamb* (CDL), and there were scattered sightings of individuals in other nearby counties (*vide* KS). Sharp-shinned Hawks at High I. 7 & 14 Jul were early migrants (PBo, WBu). Following up on a May report in the Limpia Cr. area, observers found at least one Gray Hawk 27 Jun along the creek outside Ft. Davis (EC). A nestling Common Black-Hawk at Rio Grande Village in Big Bend did not survive to fledge (*vide* MF). Of special note was a 2nd nesting pair of Common Black-Hawks for *Tom Green*, discovered 24 Jul, which successfully fledged young (TM). A bit n. of their usual range were 2 White-tailed Hawks seen in *Waller* 21 Jul (F & CC). Another good summer find was a Zone-tailed Hawk at Bentsen 18 Jul (MD). The presence of five pairs of American Kestrels hanging around power poles in *Dallas* was intriguing (KN). The species has nested in a variety of sites in that area for perhaps a decade, but this has not been well-documented (*vide* DHu, MWh). Another kestrel was noted in Wichita Falls 4 Jun–22 Jul (DMc). The Peregrine Fund and their partners released the 500th captive-raised Aplomado Falcon in Texas at Aransas 31

Jul. An Aplomado wandered e. to McFaddin, *Jefferson*, 7 Jul (TL). There were two early sightings of Peregrine Falcons in n. Texas: 15 Jul at Hagerman (LL) and 21 Jul at Cooper L. (MWh, BSt). A Prairie Falcon seen at the w. edge of Midland 19 Jul was well away from any known nesting area (BLu).

#### RAILS THROUGH SKIMMERS

There were three interesting and early Sora records: single birds in *Randall* 8 July (two locations, LKJ, EK, BaP), *Tarrant* 14 Jul (SC), and at Anahuac on the coast 29 Jul (NBL). A Purple Gallinule was unexpected at Waco 29 Jun–1 Jul (FB). A Whooping Crane that failed to leave its winter range was seen wandering around Aransas Bay in July (*vide* TSt). Two American Golden-Plovers were late at Mitchell L., *Bexar*, 6 Jun and 16 Jul (*vide* GSc). During June, Lasley and Ditto had about 10 pairs of Wilson's Plovers nesting on a private ranch in w. *Kenedy* at least 25 mi from the coast (ph.); we are unaware of other nesting records this far inland. Based on the number of reports on TexBirds, there may have been a larger-than-usual influx of southbound Long-billed Curlews in early July. A wayward ad. Hudsonian Godwit was at Balmorhea L. 5 Jun (RR). A southbound Marbled Godwit was at bit early 14 Jul at Ft. Hancock, *Hudspeth* (JPa, BZ). A Red Knot 22 Jun at Bryan Beach, *Brazoria* (RWe), was among the rarer summer shorebirds, as were 10 Semipalmated Sandpipers at the same location 18 Jun (RWe, TC). Another interesting Semipalmated was at Ft. Hancock 14 Jul (JPa). Rare for summer was a Common Snipe in *Randall* 20 Jul (EK, RSc).

Pomarine Jaegers far outnumbered Parasitics in offshore waters (SW). The only semi-interesting gulls of the summer were single Laughing Gulls in the Panhandle in *Randall* 16 Jul (BaP) and in far w. Texas at McNary Res. 20–22 Jul (JPa, RR). A group of 25 Common Terns at Bryan Beach was a pretty good number on the coast 19 Jul (TC). Caspian Terns of note in w. Texas included 2 seen 17 Jun at Balmorhea L. (PH, BrF) and one 14 Jul at Ft. Hancock (JPa, BZ). Black Skimmers seemed to get a late start on nesting in *Brazoria*, putting late chicks in some environmental stress late in the season (*vide* RWe); only 300 fledglings were produced at one site compared with 900 last year.

#### OWLS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A pair of Spotted Owls closely attended a

presumed nesting cavity in the Davis Mts. 22–30 Jun (JKa, MAd, PH, CS et al.), providing a 3rd record for the area, although no confirmation of breeding success was noted. A single Lesser Nighthawk on w. Galveston I. 7 Jun (JSt et al.) furnished one of few summer records for the U.T.C. A Chimney Swift was a nice find in far w. Texas 28 Jun in El Paso (RR). Details on a Green Violet-ear in w. Travis were submitted to the Texas Hummingbird Round-Up (organized by TPWD), providing the 4th county record (†TW). An imm. Broad-billed Hummingbird was in the Davis Mts., 13–30 Jul (M&ME, Bly). Well away from w. Texas was a **White-eared Hummingbird** photographed in Fredericksburg, Gillespie, 31 Jul–4 Aug (MM), providing about the 10th Texas record. Presumably the same **Berylline Hummingbird** documented in May in the Davis Mts. appeared at the same feeders 4 Jun and 12 Jul (M&ME). A Buff-bellied Hummingbird at Packery Channel, Nueces, 3 Jun (M&AC) was a rare record for the barrier island; 2 Buff-bellieds showed up for the 3rd year in Washington 5 Jul & 1 Aug (MEf). Lucifer Hummingbirds continue to be noted in increasing numbers in the Davis Mts.; a male performed courtship flights in June, and immature birds were seen at several locations in July (M&ME, KB et al.). Although most Calliope Hummingbirds arrived in w. Texas as much as three weeks late, one early bird was in El Paso 24 Jun (JPa). A female Green Kingfisher provided a first Washington record 16 Jun (Dvo).

Four years ago, we summarized the status of Red-cockaded Woodpecker in Texas (*Field Notes* 50:971). This year's survey shows an 8% increase in active clusters (342 total active clusters, 301 on federal and state lands and 41 on private lands). This increase is attributed to such management efforts as artificial cavities, translocations, and prescribed fire to maintain the open pine forest the species prefers (JR, *vide* CSh). Yellow-shafted Flickers nested at the edge of their expected range in Russ Pittman Park in Bellaire, Harris (FC) and in a fence post on the coastal prairie just outside Anahuac (DVe). A Northern Flicker was well away from any known breeding areas 31 Jul at Spicewood, Burnet (DY).

#### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH VIREOS

Delivering on a promise to find the first **Dusky Flycatcher** nest in Texas, Ro Wauer and Kelly Bryan observed a male bringing food to a nest in a Gambel's Oak near the

summit of Mt. Livermore 21 Jun. At least two more pairs were found around the summit, indicating a small but possibly regular population (CS et al.). The species had been found in the nesting season at this site in previous years, and there are older summer observations in the Guadalupe Mts. as well. A calling Gray Flycatcher at Buffalo L. 29 Jul provided only the 3rd record for the Panhandle (KS). Although the **Buff-breasted Flycatcher** male was refound on territory in the Davis Mts. in the spring, it took a while to confirm that the species was once again nesting. However, a female and newly constructed nest were discovered 2 Jul (KB, M&CL); a follow-up visit 5 Aug found two newly fledged young (ph. KB, JyP). This is just the 2nd nesting record for the state. Perhaps 30 miles e. of its regular range, a Black Phoebe was at Castroville, Medina, 22 Jun (GSc). An Eastern Phoebe pair was feeding fledglings at Buffalo L. 20 Jul, a first refuge nesting record (RSc); another nest was confirmed at Palo Duro Canyon 3 Jul, and yet another singing bird was in McBride Canyon, Potter, the same day (KS). Despite expectations that **Dusky-capped Flycatchers** would first be documented nesting in Texas in the Davis Mts., where sightings had accumulated in recent years, this landmark event instead occurred in the Chisos Mts. of Big Bend. Nick Block watched a pair of Dusky-capped on the Laguna Meadow trail on 9 May carrying nest material into a cavity in a madrone; nestlings being fed by the adults were confirmed 23 Jun (BrF, PH). Two fledglings were subsequently reported through at least 28 Jul (m.ob.). An Ash-throated Flycatcher was about one county east of the expected range at Benbrook L., Tarrant, 18–19 Jul (SCof, JWS). Three Great Kiskadees hung out at Pt. O'Connor all season and were suspected of nesting (BrF); this location is well away from typical haunts of this L.R.G.V. speciality. At the upper end of the L.R.G.V., a pair of Tropical Kingbirds were heard at Santa Margarita Ranch, Starr, 4 Jun (BMc); the pair at Big Bend's Cottonwood Campground were nesting 5 May+ (JMu, m.ob.). A possible extralimital nesting attempt by Couch's Kingbirds occurred at Pt. O'Connor, Calhoun, 1 Jun–5 Jul (BrF). Despite being "within range", a pair of Western Kingbirds that nested at 6000 ft. in the Davis Mts. was unprecedented for that highland preserve (KB, BrF, m.ob.).

We had encouraging reports of Bell's Vireos in Delta, Franklin, Harrison, and

Lamar in ne. Texas (m.ob.). Curiously, a Bell's Vireo was on w. Galveston I., 9 July, perhaps a first July record for the U.T.C. (JSt). Black-capped Vireos continued to show low rates of nest parasitism (<10%) at major colonies at Balcones Canyonlands and Ft. Hood, where cowbird control efforts continue (*vide* CS, PC). Several pairs of Warbling Vireos were at Dallas' White Rock L. and at L. Cleburne in Johnson (CE), the only known nesting sites in nc. Texas. Two rare singing Red-eyed Vireos were detected in the Panhandle: one at L. Marvin, Hemphill, 14 Jun and another at Palo Duro Canyon 24 Jul (both KS). Quite frustrating to these editors, not one bit of documentation was forwarded to us or the TBRC on a singing Yellow-green Vireo that spent the summer at Sabal Palms. This bird was apparently photographed, videotaped, and tape-recorded, seen by scores of observers, and widely reported on the Internet. The historical ornithological record for Texas, however, may not show that it ever occurred. There are only about 30 documented records for Texas.

#### CROWS THROUGH THRASHERS

Fish Crows summered at L. Tawakoni, Raines/Van Zandt for the 2nd time since 1996 (MWh). A massive roost of 50,000+ Purple Martins had built up in nw San Antonio by late in the season (*vide* WS). Tree Swallows were found nesting at L. Sam Rayburn, Nacogdoches, for the first time. Adults were carrying nest material 21 Jun (DL) and were apparently incubating eggs 30 Jun (CDF); this is the southernmost known nesting. A Cave Swallow remained at S.S.W.T.P., Dallas until 3 Jun (SCof). A small band of Bushtits at the upper end of Possum Kingdom Res., Young, 17 Jun may have provided a first county record and just about defines the edge of that species' range in n. Texas (KN). Perhaps a prelude of things to come was a very early Red-breasted Nuthatch in Amarillo, Randall, 24 Jul (RSc). Perhaps also early was a Marsh Wren in Midland 31 Jul (FR, RMS). Four Cactus Wrens were a bit north in Oldham 23 Jul (BaP, RSc). Two singing Clay-colored Robins in Roma, Starr, 17 Jul suggested possible nesting (PDH). An intriguing find was a Gray Catbird near Canyon, Randall, 11 Jun (ID). Equally eyebrow-raising was a pair of nesting Brown Thrashers in Midland feeding young on 3 Jul (BA). Apparently the Blue Mockingbird which first showed up on private property in Weslaco in spring 1999 has never left (*vide* MLi, m.ob.), although it has been difficult to observe. Whether or

not its sedentary nature is germane to the issue of wild vs. captive origin is a prime topic of speculation.

**WARBLERS THROUGH TANAGERS**

Here we can summarize the tail end of the spring migration, some summering information, and lastly the beginning of the fall migration. A Magnolia Warbler in San Antonio 2 Jun was late (GSc), as were a Black-throated Blue on Galveston I. 1 Jun (NO) and a Hooded Warbler in Midland 2 Jun (SSt). The singing male Colima Warbler in the Davis Mts. proved to be elusive through June (JKa, KB et al); no pairing or nesting evidence was confirmed. Despite worsening drought conditions in the Hill Country, habitats received just enough moisture to allow Golden-cheeked Warblers a rather productive nesting season; young were numerous in early June at Balcones Canyonlands and at Friederick Park outside of San Antonio (CS, TR, m.ob.). Up to 3 territorial Yellow-throated Warblers were noted at Brazos Bend during June, apparently a first for the park (DH). Also on territory was a pair of Black-and-white Warblers in *Kent* on the South Plains through the season (TSO). There were sightings of Pine Warblers in stands of Loblolly Pine at four locations in late May–28 Jun in post-oak-dominated *Washington* (DV), where the species was unknown previously in the summer. Perhaps the best find of the season was Texas' 3rd **Slate-throated Redstart** found in the high Davis Mts. 21–25 Jun (MAd, JKa, BrF, et al.); this male was apparently singing on territory, at least for a short while (tape-recorded by KB, CS; ph. KB, MAd). Some aspects of its plumage suggested it might have been a second-year bird, which might preclude the possibility of it being the individual discovered at the same spot in 1997. Two singing Yellow-breasted Chats were at L. Meredith Recreation Area 3 Jul (KS). Following up on the Rufous-capped Warbler pair seen this spring at Dolan Falls, we learned from Karges that the last observation of the summer was 25 Jun, although nesting was not noted. To begin the fall migration, an imm. Yellow Warbler showed up in Lubbock 13 & 16 Jul (AF). By late in July reports of several other early southbound warblers were being posted with excitement on TexBirds.

The Merritts had both a Rose-breasted and a Black-headed Grosbeak in a mulberry tree at Midland 19 Jun, an unexpected dual sighting there. An Indigo Bunting at

Guadalupe Mts., *Culbertson*, 15 Jun was a rare summer find, but it was trumped by as many as four nesting pairs in *Jeff Davis* through June (in Limpia Canyon and at the state park). The latter represented the first nesting records for the county in 42 years (*fide* PE). Singing Dickcissels were unexpected in Midland 10 & 30 Jul (D&JMe, FR, RMS). Two Yellow-headed Blackbirds were late in *Nacogdoches* 25 Jun (GH). A small colony of nesting Brewer's Blackbirds was discovered near the McDonald Observatory in the Davis Mts. 22 May (TG, EBr). Adults were feeding young 14 Jun (KB) and the birds were present into July (MAd), providing a 3rd Texas nesting record and the 2nd for these mountains. Two Bronzed Cowbirds in Lubbock throughout the season were a great if disheartening rarity (PK, m.ob.). A male Hooded Oriole on Galveston I. 19 Jul constituted a first summer record for the U.T.C. (JSt). House Finches were detected in a few more e. Texas counties, with single birds in *Harrison*, *Marion*, and *Smith* in July. Only the 2nd July sighting for the Panhandle was a Red Crossbill at Buffalo L. 19 Jul (BH, LG). Yet more intriguing July records up north included a Pine Siskin at a residence in Lubbock 11 Jul (JB) and an Evening Grosbeak in Amarillo, *Randall*, 27–28 Jul (B&NS). Another Evening Grosbeak was in *Marion* 24–25 Jun (WBa, SG), strange and early for deep e. Texas.

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