

# Texas



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The first half of the winter was characterized by dry conditions throughout the most of the state, but the last two months of the period saw good rains in all areas except far West Texas. El Paso's drought continued through the winter: the city's 2003 rainfall barely exceeded 10 cm, approximately half of normal and the fourth lowest annual total of the last 125 years. The Chihuahuan Desert had almost no grass or seeds this winter, and species that are normally common in this season (e.g., Brewer's, Rufous-crowned, and Black-throated Sparrows) were scarce. Far western Texas did see a strong invasion of Western Scrub-Jays, a

few White-breasted Nuthatches, and record numbers of Acorn and Lewis's Woodpeckers. In South Texas, the weather could be considered "mild to normal," with no sustained freezing temperatures. This produced an abundance of rodents, which seemed to enhance the raptor population. This is a plausible explanation (*vide* JA) for the unprecedented overwintering of five or more Broad-winged Hawks in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

The highlight of the season was the unprecedented movement of western gulls into the state, including two Slaty-backed Gulls and a state-first Glaucous-winged Gull. These mega-rarities were joined by larger-than-normal numbers of California and Thayer's Gulls and were just one part of the interesting gull story that unfolded this winter in Texas that continued into the spring.

**Abbreviation:** U.T.C. (Upper Texas Coast). The following are shortened names for the respective local, county, state, or national

parks, and wildlife refuges, etc.: Anahuac, Bentsen, Big Bend, Big Bend Ranch, Buescher, Buffalo Lake, Caprock Canyons, San Bernard, Santa Ana, Sea Rim, and Trinity River.

## LOONS THROUGH STORKS

Red-throated Loons made a good showing this season, with one at E.V. Spence Res., Coke 31 Dec (EC) and 2 there 11 Jan (BL), up to 2 at L. Benbrook, Tarrant 15 Jan+ (MR), and 2 at L. Buchanan, Burnet 1 Feb (TFe). This was also a banner year for Pacific Loons, with up to 12 birds reported from various locations around the state. Common Loons were present in good numbers on L. Meredith, Hutchinson, as many as 7 at a time. Rare in far w. Texas, a lone Common Loon was at McNary Res., Hudspeth 9 Jan (BZ). Two ad. Least Grebes with 2 chicks were at Mitchell L., Bexar 22 Feb (SCo). Two Horned Grebes at McNary Res. 14 Dec were notable (†BZ), as was a single bird at Balmorhea L., Reeves 7–20 Dec (ML, MAd). Red-necked Grebes were found at Kurth L., Angelina 1 Jan+ (†GG et al.) and Wright Patman L., Bowie 24 Jan (†MD). Two Western Grebes were present on L. Buchanan, Llano 28 Feb (TFe), and more unexpected was one at L. O' the Pines, Marion 6 Dec (DB). Also special were Clark's Grebes at L. Meredith 14 Dec (BP) and Greenbelt L., Donley 25 Jan (BP, RSc), the latter a first county record.

A flock of 84 American White Pelicans at Balmorhea L., Reeves 7 Dec was the largest count ever at this site (ML). Representing only the 2nd winter record for Brown Pelican in the Oaks & Prairies region, one was picked up in Temple, Bell 28 Dec (*vide* TFe). A Neotropic Cormorant at L. Buchanan, Llano 22 Dec (TFe) provided a rare winter record for the Edwards Plateau. An astonishing 52 Neotropic Cormorants was a notable winter concentration at L. Somerville, Washington 1 Jan (CMe); also of note was one in the company of Double-crested in Dallas 20 Dec (KC). Double-crested Cormorants are being found in the Panhandle in increasing numbers each winter; this year, 30 were found on Childress and Baylor Lakes, Childress 25 Jan (BP, RSc). Unusual in winter for ne. Texas was a small flock of Anhingas near Eastland, Eastland 30 Dec (THu).

As in other recent winters, an American Bittern visited the restored cienega at Balmorhea S.P. 15 Jan+ (TJo), and another was reported along Big Bend's Rio Grande Village Nature Trail 16–19 Feb (CN, DT). Snowy Egrets made news in n.-cen. Texas this winter, with 2 along Mountain Cr., Dallas 20 Dec (KC, MMi), 2 at L. Worth, Tarrant 4 Jan (MR), and one at Richland Cr., Freestone 22 Feb (PBa). The Snowy Egret and Little Blue Heron found 2 Feb (TFe) in Austin were either very early or very late but certainly unexpected. Three Little Blue Herons were at

the Fort Worth Nature Center, *Tarrant* 1 & 4 Jan (EF; JC), with a juv. Tricolored Heron there 1 Jan (EF). The Reddish Egret present in Lubbock in the fall was last seen on 2 Dec (BB). A rare winter find was a Green Heron near Mitchell L., *Bexar* 1 Jan (SCo). Unexpected was an imm. Black-crowned Night-Heron in Amarillo, *Potter* 2 Jan (KS). A Roseate Spoonbill was documented at Corsicana, *Navarro* 30 Dec (TFe). Two Wood Storks were seen over the Brownsville Dump, *Cameron* 10 Jan (JA), a rare winter sighting. Extremely early was a leap-year Turkey Vulture over Lubbock 29 Feb (AF).

## WATERFOWL THROUGH FALCONS

Larger and larger numbers of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks are overwintering along the U.T.C., as attested by record-high counts on several C.B.C.s. One on the Gibbons Creek C.B.C., *Grimes* 18 Dec provided an overdue first county record (JWi, TS). A Fulvous Whistling-Duck at College Station, *Brazos* 14 Dec (DPh) provided a 2nd county record; the other was 3 May 1964. A nice concentration of 3000 Greater White-fronted Geese was tallied near Uvalde, *Uvalde* 3 Jan (MH); a group of 45 Greater White-fronted Geese at Caddo L., *Harrison* 6 Dec was also noteworthy (PBa). Among the geese counted by Heindel near Uvalde on 3 Jan were 12 Ross's. Good numbers of geese wintered in far w. Texas at McNary Res., *Hudspeth*, with high counts of 227 Ross's and 75 Snows 14 Dec. A rare blue-morph Ross's Goose was present with this group on 14 & 22 Dec, an extraordinary find and a first for the Trans-Pecos (†BZ).

A group of 6-7 Trumpeter Swans were located near Lockney, *Floyd* 16 Dec (JB, MCo), but not before 2 were shot and killed and 3 others injured. These birds were from the Iowa reintroduction program. Details of 2 unbanded imm. Trumpeter Swans reported near Springlake, *Lamb* 14 Feb (†JST) will be reviewed by the state records committee. A few Tundra Swans were also reported from the Panhandle, including 3 near Springlake, *Lamb* 27 Nov-12 Dec (JB, J&TS), 8 on Cactus L., *Moore* 13 Jan (BP), and one in *Potter* 22 Feb (BP). Other Tundra Swans reported included one near Jolly, *Clay* 22 Jan (DMc) and 2 at Hagerman N.W.R. 21 Feb (MMo).

Good numbers of Redheads invaded the U.T.C. in mid-Jan, when they were seemingly everywhere, with the high count of 780 at

*Brazoria* N.W.R., *Brazoria* in Feb (RW). Greater Scaup were reported in higher-than-normal numbers in many areas of the state; whether this represents an actual increase in numbers or improved observer skill in identification is unclear. In the Trans-Pecos, a single Surf Scoter was at Tornillo Res., *El Paso* 27 Dec (EC) and 2 at Balmorhea L. 7-20 Dec (m. ob.). The Long-tailed Duck reported in Amarillo in the fall remained until 24 Jan (m. ob.), and a female was at L. Tawakoni, *Rains* 16 Feb (RB). A large count of 71 Hooded Mergansers was made on the Longview C.B.C., *Gregg* 20 Dec (*fide* PBa), and an amazing concentration of 767 Common Mergansers occurred at McNary Res. 14 Dec (BZ). Always a good find in ne. Texas, a female Common Merganser was in *Bowie* 27 Dec (CMi, MD). Red-breasted Mergansers were particularly numerous in far w. Texas this winter, with a high count of 24 at McNary Res. in Dec (BZ); a casual winter visitor to the Panhandle, one was at Greenbelt L., *Donley* 25 Jan (BP, RSc).

Quite unexpected was an Osprey at L. Alan Henry, *Garza* 21 Feb (AF), as was one

reviewed by the state records committee. An ad. Gray Hawk wintered at Big Bend's Cottonwood Campground, providing the Region's first winter record and a seasonal highlight for the park (m. ob.). An ad. Common Black-Hawk was seen at Santa Margarita Ranch, *Starr* 14 Feb (KE), and an imm. was noted at San Ygnacio, *Zapata* 20 Feb (J&MK).

Any winter record of Broad-winged Hawk in Texas is noteworthy, but this season saw an unprecedented number of records, with 2 juvs. present at Bentsen the entire season (JA, TB, KE), one at Sabal Palm Sanctuary, *Cameron* 14 Feb, and 2 at the Anacua Unit of the Las Palomas W. M. A., *Hidalgo & Cameron* 30 Dec (JA). White-tailed Hawks wandered well n. of their normal range to Crawford, *McLennan* 20 Dec (†KA, NW, JGa) and Granger L., *Williamson* 25 Jan (RKA). An imm. Zone-tailed Hawk over Houston Heights, *Harris* 29 Dec was the first for the U.T.C. (PDH). Providing very rare winter records for the Edwards Plateau were single Zone-taileds near Canyon L., *Comal* 4 & 17 Jan (GSc et al.) and Ingram, *Kerr* 20



MMMacwhat? Broad-winged Hawks wintered in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas in unprecedented numbers this year. All were first-winter birds and were found in the various wooded preserves along the Rio Grande in Cameron County and Hidalgo County. This individual was photographed at Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park on 19 January 2004. Photograph by John Arvin.

photographed at McNary Res. 14 Dec (BZ). An imm. Bald Eagle soared over Guadalupe Mountains N.P. headquarters, *Culberson* 5 Dec (KB), with other notable sightings of singles at White Rock L., *Dallas* 28 Dec (BGi), L. Halbert, *Navarro* 30 Dec (TFe), and Richland Creek W.M.A., *Navarro* 23 Feb (PBa). A pair of Cooper's Hawks was observed tending a nest in *Dallas* 28 Feb (KC); if successful, this may represent a first modern record of nesting in *Dallas*. Details of a Northern Goshawk sighted at White River L., *Crosby* 3 Jan (†Rko) will be

Jan (TGa). Always a nice find in the Trans-Pecos was a Harlan's Hawk in Big Bend on 28 Dec (MF). Ferruginous Hawks noted on the U.T.C. this season included singles near Mykawa, *Brazoria* 21 Feb (SP) and near Danbury, *Brazoria* 19 Feb (DiP, SB). A well-described Golden Eagle was observed in e. *Clay* 14 Dec (GM). Perhaps an indication of the expanding range of the Crested Caracara, a lone bird was in alfalfa fields in *Midland* 6 Jan+ (RMS, MSt). In n.-cen. Texas, a pair of Crested Caracaras was noted in sw. *Tarrant* 30 Nov (MiF), and a single was seen near Midlothian, *Ellis* 29 Feb (GSC).

An Aplomado Falcon on Follet's I., *Brazoria* 4 Dec (JSt) was the first U.T.C. report since the summer of 2000 of this reintroduced species. Peregrine Falcons were noted well

n. of their expected winter range in Lubbock 12 Jan (PK) and Jeff Davis 20 Jan (LB, ph.). A Prairie Falcon was present in *Willacy* through the period and represents only the 4th modern record for this species in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (JA). Other noteworthy Prairie Falcon sightings include singles at Kingsville, *Kleberg* 7 Feb (Jsi), Boerne City L., *Kendall* 16 Feb (CHA), and *Tarrant* 3 Jan-12 Feb (MR et al.).

## GROUSE THROUGH TERNS

An encouraging 38 Attwater's Greater

Prairie-Chickens were found on the Attwater's Prairie-Chicken N.W.R. C.B.C., *Colorado/Austin*. A strange find was a Lesser Prairie-Chicken that wandered into a n. Lubbock yard 1 Dec (AF, RLe). It is speculated that the bird got to Lubbock on its own, as there is a population of prairie-chickens within 50 km, and the species is known to wander in winter. A good count of 7 Virginia Rails was noted below the dam at Balmorhea L. 20 Dec (JGe, CE). A Sora at L. Marvin, *Hemphill* 24 Jan (BB) was certainly unexpected. A total of 194 Whooping Cranes returned to the Aransas N.W.R., *Aransas* this winter, including a pair with 2 young—only the 3rd known instance of a pair of Whoopers with 2 young at Aransas (RLi).

Providing a first winter record for the South Plains was a Snowy Plover at Muleshoe N.W.R., *Bailey* 14–21 Dec (BB, SH, HH). A high count of 25+ Snowy Plovers at Imperial Res., *Pecos* 26 & 28 Dec was exceptional (EC). An impressive count of 20 Wilson's Plovers was made on the Galveston C.B.C., *Galveston* 16 Dec. One of the many interesting discoveries of the season was a concentration of 19 Mountain Plovers near Dougherty, *Floyd* 24 Jan (JST, LV, ph.), providing a first winter record for the South Plains. Fewer birds than normal were found this season in the Granger L. area; Fennell did not know if there were actually fewer plovers or if they were more widely dispersed in the area. It may have been the latter, since new wintering sites were found in *Bell* by Pinkston.

American Avocets lingered into the winter at several inland locations: up to 6 at L. Wright Patman, *Bowie* 6 Dec–15 Feb (EC, MD), 2 at Hagerman N.W.R. 7 Dec (IK), one near Springlake, *Lamb* 13 Dec (BB, AF), and 2 in El Paso 7 Jan (BZ). A Pectoral Sandpiper near Mission, *Hidalgo* 1 Jan–early Feb provided a very rare winter occurrence for the state (*fide* JA). Always a rarity in the Trans-

Pecos in winter, 2 Dunlins were noted at Imperial Res. 26 Dec and 4 there 28 Dec (EC). A report of 45+ Stilt Sandpipers near High L., *Galveston* 21 Dec was a notable winter total (WB). A breeding-plumaged female Wilson's Phalarope reported from w. Galveston L., *Galveston* 26 Feb was very early (SL).

A Laughing Gull at Ascarate L. 1–2 Jan provided a first El Paso winter record (BZ). Also of note was a Laughing Gull at L. Wright Patman 6 Dec–15 Feb (EC, CMi, MD). Three Franklin's Gulls in *Brazos* 18 Dec (ER) and one in *Rusk* 10 Jan (JPi) provided rare winter records, while an imm. at Fort Worth 5 Jan provided a rare winter record for n.-cen. Texas (MR). A Black Tern at Galveston's East Beach 16 Dec was the first winter record in many years (DwP).

### PIGEONS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A White-tipped Dove at Uvalde, *Uvalde* 3 Jan provided a first county record (MH). As many as 13 Monk Parakeets were noted in Freeport, *Brazoria*, where they appear to have established a stable population. A high count of 13 Eastern Screech-Owls was made at White River L., *Crosby* 3 Jan (m. ob.). An active Great Horned Owl nest discovered at Greenbelt L., *Donley* 14 Jan (MEr, BP) was the earliest record of nesting for that species in the Panhandle by a month. At least 2 calling male Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls were present throughout the season at Bentsen, and the species was also reported from Santa Ana and Anzalduas County Park, *Hidalgo*, perhaps indicating that they are attempting to re-establish their former range in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (JA). An Elf Owl at Big Bend 28 Feb was early (GL, LF). A high count of 16 Short-eared Owls was tallied on 19 Feb at Granger L., *Williamson* (TFe). A female Anna's Hummingbird frequented a Lubbock yard 1 Dec–15 Feb (RE et al.); also noteworthy was a female Anna's at West Columbia, *Brazoria* 10 Jan (CB, MV). A well-

described male Costa's Hummingbird was present at Big Bend's Panther Junction 2–23 Feb (†MF, A&RD). Black-chinned Hummingbirds were noted in several locations in the e. third of the state, with 2 in *Washington* early Oct–11 Dec (F&MB, DVo), one in w. *Harris* 13–14 Dec (KY), and one in *Nacogdoches* 20 Dec. Allen's Hummingbirds documented this season included an imm. male at West Columbia 30 Jan (†CB, MV), with ad. males at Corpus Christi, *Nueces* 10 Jan (†GSw), Lake Jackson 14 Feb (†CB, CHI), Houston, *Harris* mid-Oct–15 Feb (StW, †SP), and Rockport, *Aransas* 31 Dec–27 Feb (†SBe).

Two Green Kingfishers were found at the Guadalupe Delta, *Calhoun* 17 Jan (PDH), for an unusual northerly Gulf Coast record. A female Green Kingfisher was at Rio Grande Village, *Brewster* 25 Jan (MF), and 2 were reported from the Lower Canyons of the Rio Grande, well to the e. of the national park, on 6 Feb (GL). This winter was a particularly good one for Lewis's Woodpeckers, with no fewer than 11 birds reported during the period, the easternmost being the one reported during the fall at Balcones Canyonlands N.W.R. and another at Utopia, *Bandera* 4–15 Jan (MH). Always rare in El Paso, 3 Acorn Woodpeckers wintered in the w. portion of the city (BZ). A pair of Ladder-backed Woodpeckers found in Plano, *Denton* 23 Feb+ (MW et al.) are now known to have been present for at least a year. Providing a rare cen. Hill Country record was a Downy Woodpecker wintering along the Sabinal R., *Bandera* (MH). Rare for Travis, a Hairy Woodpecker was at Webberville Park 20 Jan (BFr).

### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH JAYS

One of the outstanding finds of the season was a Greater Pewee discovered along the San Antonio R. in San Antonio 26 Dec (EB), where it remained until 24 Jan (†WS, m.

**SA** This winter saw an unprecedented movement of gulls from w. North America into Texas. The factors leading to this phenomenon are unclear, but the results were startling. Two **Mew Gulls** were well documented, with one at L. Worth, *Tarrant* 3–5 Jan (†MR) and the other at El Paso 7 Jan (†JPa). California Gulls were well represented, with at least a 16 individuals reported from almost all regions of the state. The most noteworthy was an ad. at L. Buchanan, *Llano* 22 Dec (TFe). In addition to 5 Thayer's Gulls documented during the fall, a first-winter bird was at Balmorhea L. 12 Dec–9 Jan (†MAu et al.), a first-winter at Galveston 26 Jan (†MR), and an ad. at Corpus Christi, *Nueces* 28 Feb (†WS). Even more astounding was the ad. **Slaty-backed Gull** at Balmorhea L. 1–10 Dec (†CO, †DO et al.), providing a 2nd state record—followed quickly by another at Corpus Christi, *Nueces* 21–24 Dec (†MC, WR)! A first for the state was an apparent second-winter **Western Gull x Glaucous-winged Gull** at Corpus Christi, *Nueces* 7 Feb+ (†MR, WS). But the capper on this list of w. gulls was the first state record of **Glaucous-winged Gull**, an ad. found by Reid (†) in Fort Worth 6–9 Jan.

Gulls from Eurasia were also located in the state this season. Lesser Black-backed Gulls, now relatively routine at least coastally, were reported in above-average numbers inland, with singles at Lewisville L., *Denton* 13 Dec (KL), White Rock L., *Dallas* 17 Dec (BGi, PBi) and 21–22 Dec (MW et al.), Fort Worth, *Tarrant* 30 Dec–6 Jan (MR), and L. Livingston 27 Feb (m. ob.). While perusing gulls at the productive Corpus Christi Landfill 24 Jan, Sekula (†) located a first-winter four-year gull that showed both structural and plumage characters of a **Yellow-legged Gull** of one of the w. European taxa. The cooperative, distinctive bird remained in the area through the period and was extensively photographed. After careful scrutiny of photographic evidence, worldwide gull experts were convinced that the identification was correct, the bird likely being of the *atlantis* population rather than the mainland *michahellis*. If accepted by the state records committee, this will represent another first state record.

Of great interest, too, an apparent **Kelp Gull x Herring Gull** was found at the Brownsville Dump, *Cameron* in late Feb (MI), a first-winter Glaucous Gull was present at Port Aransas, *Nueces* 3 Dec+ (LJ et al.), and a first-winter Great Black-backed Gull at Galveston 31 Jan (†MA). The Regional winter total of 14 gull species, plus two very rare hybrids, is unprecedented and rivals any place on the planet for gull diversity!

ob.). A Least Flycatcher was discovered at Nacogdoches 20 Dec for a first winter record for the Pineywoods (*vide* DWo). A Pacific-slope/Cordilleran Flycatcher was carefully studied at the Anacua Unit of the Las Palomas W.M.A., *Cameron* 25 Jan (JA), with another at Guadalupe Delta, *Refugio* 31 Dec (BFr, PH). A Black Phoebe in Bellaire, *Harris* 31 Jan+ was just the 4th U.T.C. record (DVe et al.). Two Eastern Phoebes were present throughout the period in Lubbock, and another was at different site within the city on 31 Dec (m. ob.). Say's Phoebes are only occasionally found in winter in the Panhandle, but this season found one at Buffalo L., *Randall* 24 Jan (KS) and one at Palo Duro Canyon S.P. 5 Feb (TLJ). Remarkable was a male Vermilion Flycatcher in Amarillo, *Potter* 24 Dec–5 Jan (EK, G&MI et al.); there is only one previous winter record for the Panhandle. An Ash-throated Flycatcher near Salado, *Bell* 14 Dec (RPi) represented a county first winter record. A truly outstanding find this season was a Great Kiskadee discovered in Amarillo, *Potter* 29 Dec–9 Feb (JJ et al., BP ph.); a report of a kiskadee by a non-birder about a mile away on 16 Sep (MaS) was thus of interest! Providing a very rare winter record for the Hill Country were 2 Couch's Kingbirds in Utopia, *Bandera* through the period (MH). Also of note were 4 Couch's migrating in e. *Matagorda* 26 Feb (RW et al.). Very unusual was a Western Kingbird at Seadrift, *Calhoun* 12 Dec (BFr, PH). One of highlights of the season was a returning Thick-billed Kingbird at Selkirk I., *Matagorda* 15 Dec+ (†SG, m. ob.)—the easternmost documented record for Texas (and the United States). Interesting observations of lingering Scissor-tailed Flycatchers included groups of up to 10 birds roosting in trees near spotlights at a McDonald's Restaurant in Belton, *Bell* 1 Dec–2 Jan (RPi) and another group of 10 birds roosting together in Irving, *Dallas* 2 Dec (DL).

The only Northern Shrikes reported during the season were singles at Muleshoe N.W.R. 21 Dec (PK, B&SR) and Buffalo L. 26–27 Dec (JR, RSc). White-eyed Vireo records of note included 3 that wintered in the Sabinal R. Valley (MH) and one at Rio Grande Village 20 Feb (MF). A Bell's Vireo at San Ygnacio, *Zapata* 22 Feb was a puzzling winter record for a species that is almost unknown in winter in Texas (AW). Lone Gray Vireos were reported from separate Big Bend locations 7 (MP, THa, GL) & 29 Dec (PP), and 2 others were found 26 Feb (KB). Another excellent find of the season was a lone Cassin's Vireo in San Antonio 15–22 Feb (MR, SCo, WS). Rare in the Trans-Pecos, Blue-headed Vireos were at Big Bend's Cottonwood Campground 16 Dec (J&WR) and Lajitas, *Brewster* 17 Jan (LC, MF). In contrast to recent years, only

a single Steller's Jay wintered in El Paso, seen 17 Feb (BZ). A Fish Crow was seen and heard at San Bernard, *Brazoria* 15 Dec (DiP).

### SWALLOWS THROUGH WARBLERS

Tree Swallows put in appearances in the Trans-Pecos, with 5 at McNary 9 Jan (BZ)



This Greater Pewee spent much of the winter (here 31 December 2003) along the San Antonio Rivier in central San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. It was just the third Greater Pewee to be found during the winter in Texas and the fourteenth to be documented in the state. Photograph by Willie Sekula.

and up to 3 at Balmorhea L. 9–20 Dec (m. ob.). Huge numbers of Tree Swallows overwintered on the U.T.C., with record-high tallies on several C.B.C.s. Early-arriving Cliff Swallows were encountered at Midland 21 Feb (DK) and e. *Travis* 28 Feb (BFr). Cave Swallows apparently are wintering in small numbers in the Trans-Pecos, as individuals were noted at McNary and Balmorhea during the season. Perhaps more noteworthy were Cave Swallows farther e., with up to 3 at College Station, *Brazos* 1 Nov–1 Mar (ER), 2 at Round Rock, *Williamson* 24 Dec (TFe), approximately 200 in *Robertson* 18 Jan (CS), 16 in *Bastrop* 25 Jan (BFr), and 24 at L. Buchanan, *Burnet/Llano* 1 Feb (TFe). An excellent discovery was a lingering Barn Swallow at McNary Res., *Hudspeth* 14 Dec.

An apparently "pure" Tufted Titmouse was studied near Holland, *Bell* 25 Jan, where only hybrid forms are normally found (RPi). A surprise to Midland observers was a flock

of 10–20 Bushtits from 10 Jan+ (AW, SE et al.), providing a first county record. Red-breasted Nuthatches were extremely scarce in the state this season and were undetected in many areas. Winter Wrens wandered to the Lower Rio Grande Valley, with single birds present through the period at Bentsen and the Santa Margarita Ranch (JA) and one at San Ygnacio, *Zapata* 22 Feb (AW). Three Sedge Wrens were present in Lubbock through 7 Feb (m. ob.). A single Sedge Wren was at Balmorhea L. 6 Dec (DO, CO); 3 were located in the same habitat 20 Dec (JGe, CE). Golden-crowned Kinglets were reported in far-below-normal numbers throughout the e. half of the state this season. Rare in winter were 2 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers at Balmorhea L., *Reeves* 9 Jan (ML) and one in *Dickens* 3 Jan (AF).

Wood Thrushes were noted in *Bastrop* 29 Dec–25 Jan (BFr) and Washington-on-the-Brazos S.H.P., *Washington* 26 Feb (BV). The Gray Catbird reported near Lorenzo, *Crosby* in the fall remained until 21 Dec (*vide* ML). In the Trans-Pecos, Gray Catbirds were reported from Balmorhea S.P., *Reeves* 3 Jan (TJo) and at Guadalupe Mountains N.P. the same day (JW, JGa). A Sprague's Pipit at Rio Grande Village, *Brewster* 29 Dec (DWA) was an excellent find. Twenty Sprague's Pipits in *Franklin* 1 Feb (MW) made a good count for ne. Texas. Cedar Waxwings were late arriving and were generally reported in low numbers this season throughout the state.

A Nashville Warbler foraging at Big Bend's Persimmon Gap 23 Jan (BC) was unexpected. A first winter record for the South Plains was provided by a Northern Parula in Lubbock 23–31 Dec (MCA et al.). Two Yellow Warblers wintered at Anzalduas County Park, *Hidalgo* (JA) and a male Yellow Warbler—of the chestnut-headed "Mangrove Warbler" (*erithachorides*) group—was present on a small island in the Laguna Madre, *Cameron* 1 Dec–1 Mar (†ph., ScC). A highlight of the season was a well-documented Chestnut-sided Warbler in San Antonio, *Bexar* 27 Dec+ (BS, m. ob.). Black-throated Gray Warblers away from normal wintering areas included singles at San Antonio 26 Jan (BD) and at Big Bend's Cottonwood Campground 9 Feb+ (PBR). A

surprise was a Yellow-throated Warbler at San Antonio 1 Jan+ (MG, m. ob.). Another unexpected inland warbler was a Prairie Warbler at Canyon L., *Comal* 4 Jan–3 Feb (DPu et al.). It was a good winter for Prairie Warblers on the U.T.C., with singles noted at two locations in *Galveston*, as well as Sea Rim and Sabine Woods, *Jefferson*, and at San Bernard, *Brazoria*. A nice find was a Palm Warbler along the Pecos R. at U.S. Hwy 90, *Pecos* 14 Feb (RH). Freeman and Hockey tallied an amazing 20 Palm Warblers at the Guadalupe Delta, *Refugio* 11 Jan. A very early Black-and-white Warbler was singing near L. Weatherford, *Parker* 21 Feb (DPi). A nice discovery was a male American Redstart in Dallas, *Dallas* 31 Dec (†BBa). A Louisiana Waterthrush was banded as it overwintered along two small creeks in *Washington* (†DVo), an unprecedented event for the cen. Brazos Valley. A very early Louisiana Waterthrush was at Brazos Bend, *Fort Bend* 13 Feb (DH, BGo). Presumably the same male MacGillivray's Warbler that wintered last year was at the same w. Galveston I. location 28–29 Feb (DiP, DwP). One of the highlights of the season was a male Gray-crowned Yellowthroat at the Sabal Palm Sanctuary, *Cameron* 8 Feb+ (BGe, †BMc, m. ob.), which constitutes only the 7th modern record for Texas and the U.S. An out-of-range Wilson's Warbler was at Boerne, *Kendall* 2 Feb (ES). Another interesting winter Wilson's Warbler was at Rio Grande Village 29 Dec–10 Jan (DWa, ML). The Painted Redstart that wintered last year in Richmond, *Fort Bend* returned 7 Dec (WHE).

## TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

Interesting Summer Tanager sightings included singles in Houston, *Harris* 4 Dec–31 Jan (DVe et al.), San Antonio, *Bexar* 2 Jan (HR), and in *Nacogdoches* 27–31 Jan (CDF). A male Western Tanager was at Buescher S.P., *Bastrop* 28 Dec (CMe). Greater scrutiny of towhees in the w. half of the state continues to provide records of Eastern Towhee. This season, 3 were in the L. Marvin area, *Hemphill* 3 Jan (m. ob.), and another was in Palo Duro Canyon 31 Jan (KS); in the Hill Country, one was noted in *Mason* 29 Dec–31 Jan (DF). A Rufous-crowned Sparrow wandered to the L.B.J. National Grasslands, *Wise* 22 Jan (MCu). An American Tree Sparrow reported at the Caddo Grasslands 20 Dec (TGr) adds to the very few ne. Texas records. A Clay-colored Sparrow near Rio Grande Village 29 Dec (MAd, LL, M&ME) provided a rare winter record for Big Bend. A Baird's Sparrow was well observed near Marfa, *Presidio* 20 Dec (†ML, †EC). More unexpected was a Baird's Sparrow reported near Longview, *Gregg* the

same day (†DMe). In the Panhandle, a Le Conte's Sparrow was a rare find in Palo Duro Canyon 11 Dec (KS), while an amazing 21 were tallied at Kickapoo Caverns, *Kinney* 31 Jan (ML). A Red Fox Sparrow was noted in El Paso 10 Jan (JPa). Always a good find in Texas, a White-winged Junco was documented at Guadalupe Mountains N.P. 3–4 Jan (GW, †KB).

A Black-headed Grosbeak, casual in East Texas, was in *Walker* 29 Dec (BM). Painted Buntings were found in *Beaumont*, *Jefferson* 31 Dec (*fide* HJ), *League City*, *Galveston* 30 Jan (BH), and *Armand Bayou*, *Harris* 7–20 Feb (RR et al.). Four Rusty Blackbirds were found in near Lubbock, *Lubbock* 20 Dec (BB, B&SR) and 2 others in the city 31 Dec (MCa, AF). A female Orchard Oriole at Rio Grande Village 20 Feb (MF) and a female Hooded Oriole there 22 Feb (GL) were very early, possibly wintering birds. Providing rare winter records, a female Hooded overwintered at Rancho Viejo, *Cameron* (BMc), and an ad. with and 3–4 female or imm. birds were at Salineño, *Starr* 14 Feb (KE). A female Bullock's Oriole was in Midland 1 Jan–14 Feb (D&JM). Scott's Orioles at *Mason* 25 Dec (Dixie Feuerbacher, Bobby Frazier) and near Boerne, *Kendall* 4 Jan (SuW) provided rare winter records for the Hill Country. A Purple Finch wandered to Lubbock 24–25 Jan (E&TM). Unusual was a group of 6 Lesser Goldfinches in Amarillo, *Potter* the last week of Feb (JPr).

**Undocumented:** The following Texas Bird Records Review Species were reported without documentation: Mew Gull at White Rock L., *Dallas* 28 Dec; Thayer's Gull at East Beach, *Galveston* 12–21 Dec, 14 Feb.

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