

The summer of 2004 was generally a wet and cool one in Texas, particularly in June, although July was much drier in the eastern portions of the state. Much of the western part of the state that has experienced drought conditions over the past several years saw a return to normal precipitation patterns, and some areas saw rainfall amounts well above the norm. As a result, there were reports of tremendous breeding success in most areas of the state, and particularly so in the Trans-Pecos and South Texas.

Many of the rarities of the spring remained into the summer season, including the United States' first Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush. Following the spring record of Greater Flamingo on the upper coast, another was discovered near Port Isabel. This marks the third year out of four that one or more flamingos have been documented along the Texas coast. One has to wonder how many others have been around, with over 500 km of coastline and thousands of hectares of inaccessible habitat available.

Abbreviations: T.B.R.C. (Texas B.R.C.); 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, Buffalo Lake, San Bernard, and Santa Ana.

LOONS THROUGH STORKS

Providing a rare summer record was a Pacific Loon in Matagorda Bay, *Calhoun* 1 Jun–8 Jul (BFr). A Least Grebe at Brazoria N.W.R., *Brazoria* 23 Jul (DJa) was further evidence that this species is now an annual visitor to the U.T.C. Far more unusual was a nesting pair of Least Grebes at Richland Creek W.M.A., *Freestone* 1 Jun+ (CLa). This pair produced two broods, with eggs in one nest while still caring for the 5 chicks produced in the first clutch (HH, JGu et al.). A concentration of 40 Pied-billed Grebes at the Abilene W.T.P., *Callaghan* 31 Jul (LBl) included many juvs., providing a first nesting record for the county. Out-of-place Eared Grebes included single breeding-plumaged birds at Granger L., *Williamson* 15 Jun (TFe) and Temple, *Bell* 22 Jun (RPi). Also of interest were up to 30 Eared Grebes through the period at McNary Res., *Hudspeth*, where breeding was anticipated but never materialized (JPa).

The 16 Jul pelagic trip out of South Padre I., *Cameron* produced 71 Cory's Shearwaters and 36 Band-rumped Storm-Petrels (JA, BMC et al.), both good counts for Texas waters. With the recovery of Brown Pelicans along the Texas Coast, inland wandering individuals have become expected during the summer, but totally unprecedented was an apparent flock of 35 over L. Belton, *Bell* 6 Jul (RKO). A Brown Pelican on L. Arlington, *Tarrant* 26 Jul (*vide* GK) was well n. of the normal dispersal pattern.

Texas



Neotropical Cormorants again nested in El Paso, but this year's 15 nests represented a considerable increase. This species continues to increase during the summer on reservoirs in cen. and n.-cen. Texas, with numerous birds present in *Bell* 15 Jun–31 Jul (RPi, RKO) and at scattered locations n. of there, including 2 at Millers Creek Res., *Baylor* 18 Jul (BG, GCo) that provided a first county record. Unexpected summer records of Double-crested Cormorant were provided by singles at Galveston Bay, *Galveston* 18 Jun (WB) and Stillhouse Hollow L., *Bell* 4 Jul (RPi). The numbers of Magnificent Frigatebirds present on the U.T.C. have increased dramatically in recent years, as evidenced by 75–100 at Smith Pt., *Chambers* and 200+ in Galveston Bay during the season (WB).

Two sightings of American Bittern were of particular interest, one at Hornsby Bend, *Travis* 6 June (J&AB) and another at Anahuac N.W.R., *Chambers* 26 Jun (KA), where the species nested last year. The Great White Heron at Texas City, *Galveston* was last report-

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ed 21 Jun (*vide* SL). A first for the Panhandle was a nesting pair of Great Egrets in Amarillo, *Potter* (KS): two pairs were discovered 28 Jul, including one bird apparently brooding; by 10 Aug, the nest contained two young. The closest known breeding locations for this species are approximately 320 km away. Snowy Egrets were unusually common on the South Plains, with a high count of 37 at Lubbock 12 Jul, while 14 near Idalou, *Lubbock* during the period were thought to be nesting (AF et al.) Noteworthy Panhandle heron sightings included a Little Blue Heron in *Briscoe* 21 Jul (JST), a Tricolored Heron near Middle Water, *Hartley* 3 Jul (SC, MR ph.), and a Yellow-

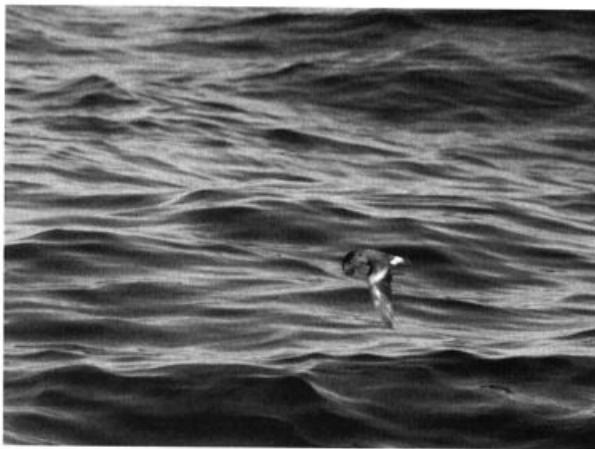
crowned Night-Heron at Canyon, *Randall* 19 Jul (JJ). Three Tricolored Herons were noted at Richland Creek W.M.A., *Freestone* 19 Jun (PB), with one lingering until 25 Jul (DDC, DL et al.). Providing possible evidence of local breeding, imm. Black-crowned Night-Herons were found in Salado 15 Jun and at nearby Temple, *Bell* 28 Jun and 15 Jul (RPi). Yellow-crowned Night-Heron discoveries of note included one in *Baylor* 18 Jul (BG, GCo) and 2 at McNary Res., *Hudspeth* 23 Jul (VE, BZ). A very early wandering White Ibis was Hagerman, *Grayson* 8 Jun (LL, m.ob.). White-faced Ibis were surprisingly numerous on the South Plains this season, with scattered sightings over much of the area and high counts of 36 near Olton, *Lamb* and 54 at Idalou, *Lubbock* (m.ob.). Early inland wandering Roseate Spoonbills included one at Waco, *McLennan* 13 Jun (AJ) and 5 at Richland Creek, *Navarro* 19 Jun (PB). A total of 125 Wood Storks at Brazoria N.W.R. 6 Jun was a high total for so early (TC), as were 40 at Richland Creek 19 Jun (PB). On the heels of the spring U.T.C. record, another Greater (Caribbean) Flamingo was at the Bahia Grande (near Port Isabel), *Cameron* 24 Jun–29 Jul (JFr, †m.ob.).

WATERFOWL THROUGH FALCONS

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks established themselves in *Grimes* for the first time this summer: up to 7 appeared regularly near Bedia (BC); the only prior county record is a single bird found on last winter's C.B.C. The Long-tailed Duck that spent the winter and spring at Amarillo, *Potter* was seen again 12 Jun (BPi). As usual, there were a few summering *Aythya* around, including a Canvasback at Meadow L., *Williamson* 24 Jul (KM) and single Lesser Scaup at McNary Res., *Hudspeth* 11 Jun (JPa) and Richland Creek W.M.A., *Freestone* 19 Jun (PB). Up to 100 Ruddy Ducks were at McNary Res. through the period, but breeding was not confirmed there (JPa).

Single Ospreys provided unexpected summer records near Fort Davis, *Jeff Davis* 10 Jul (JK, JMu), L. Amistad, *Val Verde* 28–29 Jul (JMu), L. Somerville, *Burleson* 20 Jul (CLi), and L. Buchanan, *Llano* 30 Jul (TFe). A Swallow-tailed Kite in *Bastrop* 18 Jul (SH, DD) was at the w. edge of the typical migration path. Mississippi Kites again had a very good breeding season in the Central Brazos Valley, with many nesting pairs discovered in *Brazos* and *Washington* (m.ob.) and a few to the s. in *Austin* (SR, BiB, WM). Also noteworthy was a single Mississippi Kite at L. Somerville, *Lee* 19 Jun (CLi) and a nesting pair at *Bastrop*, *Bastrop* (DR). A rare breeder on the U.T.C., Northern Harriers nested on w. Galveston I., *Galve-*

ston, producing 4 young (Jst). Also of note were single Northern Harriers near Wills Pt., *Van Zandt* 6 Jun (DDC) and Marathon, *Brewster* 19 Jun (BSt). Nesting records of Cooper's Hawks this season included one near Garrison, *Nacogdoches* (JPD, m.ob.), only the 2nd for the Pineywoods in 30 years, as well as at White Rock L., *Dallas* (KC, m.ob.) and *Denton* (PP), where the species was only confirmed as a



Band-rumped Storm-Petrel appears to be the most common storm-petrel species in the Gulf of Mexico. This Band-rumped was one of 36 seen in deep water east of South Padre Island, Texas 16 July 2004. Photograph by John Arvin.

nester in n.-cen. Texas last year. That Common Black-Hawks again nested at Rio Grande Village, *Brewster* is not news, but that they successfully fledged 2 young (MF) was very noteworthy, as one fledgling is more the norm for this species, and this pair has not always been productive. Broad-winged Hawk is a rare



Furnishing one of only four records of Tricolored Heron for the Texas Panhandle, this bird was found on a small pond near Middle Water, Hartley County on 3 July 2004. Photograph by Martin Reid.

breeder on the U.T.C. w. of Beaumont, so one at Jesse Jones Park, *Harris* 5 Jun (LO et al.) and 2 ads. over the Cypress G.C., *Harris* 10 Jul (WN) were of interest. Following the trend of recent years, ad. light-morph Short-tailed

Hawks were present at Bentsen, *Hidalgo* 19 Jun (†BSu) and Santa Ana, *Hidalgo* 20 Jun–4 Jul (ph., †BSu, DJo). There were numerous Swainson's Hawks sightings suggestive of local breeding in the Blackland Prairies area from *Bell* and *Williamson* s. to *Guadalupe* (TFe et al.). Also of interest were single Swainson's near Chappell Hill, *Washington* 20 Jun (DVo) and Waller, *Waller* 28 Jul (FC). An American Kestrel at Austin, *Travis* 14 Jul (CS) was well away from any known breeding areas. Peregrine Falcon is certainly breeding in the Franklin Mts, El Paso, where 2 ads. were present 20 Jun (BZ) and another was at nearby Ft. Bliss 30 Jul (BZ). Odd summer sightings of Peregrines included singles in *Floyd* 10 Jul (AF, AH), *Swisher* 11 Jul (JST), and at Balmorhea, *Reeves* 26 Jun (ML, JPa). Single Prairie Falcons in *Randall* 22 Jul (KS) and *Bailey* 31 Jul (AF, BPh, LV, HWu) were also unexpected.

QUAIL THROUGH TERNS

Three quail identified as Montezuma Quail were sighted near Panther Junction in Big Bend 6 Jul (MPa), providing one of the very few reports for the park since the failed 1983 reintroduction attempt. Apparently healthy Sandhill Cranes were noted at Cactus L., *Moore* 19 Jun (BPi) and near Round Top, *Fayette* throughout Jul (GS). A Black-bellied Plover at Fort Hancock, *Hudspeth* 27 Jul (JPa) was a Jul first for the El Paso area. Snowy Plover is not known to breed in n.-cen. Texas, so 3 discovered at Millers Creek Res., *Baylor* 18 Jul (BG, GCo) were of particular interest. Twelve ad. and 5 juv. Black-necked Stilts at Millers Creek Res. 18 Jul (BG, GCo) provided a first breeding record for the county. A Willet on the Katy Prairie, *Waller* 19 Jun (BH) seemed out of place, as were early migrants near Floydada and South Plains, *Floyd* 9 Jul (JST). Either a very late migrant or a summering bird, an Upland Sandpiper was in *Williamson* 15 Jun (TFe). Summer sightings of Spotted Sandpiper included 2 at Muleshoe N.W.R., *Bailey* 17 Jul (BBe), 2 in *Lubbock* 18 Jul (BBe), and one at different *Lubbock* location 24 Jul (EM). Two Whimbrels spent the summer at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston* 19 Jun+ (JGr), an unusual occurrence. Long-billed Curlews were found at Fort Hood, with one in *Coryell* 22 Jun (SJ) and 3 in *Bell* 5 Jul (JR), both providing first summer records for the military base. Large gatherings of Long-billed Curlews in the Panhandle included 510 in *Deaf Smith* 2 Jul, with 459 at the same location 3 Jul and 560 still present 12 Jul (JST). Providing only the 2nd Jul sighting for the South Plains, a Marbled Godwit was near Hale Center, *Hale* 7 Jul (JST), and another ear-

ly migrant was at L. Belton, Bell 14 Jul (GCr). A good find was a Red Knot at Cactus L., Moore 20 Jul (KS). Semipalmated Sandpipers are always nice finds in the Trans-Pecos, and this season found singles at McNary Res. 23 Jul (VE, BZ) and Ft. Bliss 30 Jul (JPa). Five Least Sandpipers at Port Arthur, Jefferson 13 Jun (JW) were either late or spending the summer. Five White-rumped Sandpipers at Boca Chica Beach, Cameron 19 Jun (JA) were presumably very tardy migrants. Although alternate-plumaged Dunlin have been noted in previous summers, 20 at Bolivar Flats, Galveston 10 Jul was remarkable (CTL). A Stilt Sandpiper at Beaumont, Jefferson 13 Jun was late (John Whittle). A Wilson's Snipe at the Katy Prairie, Waller 19 Jun (BH) was the first summer sighting for the U.T.C.

Laughing Gull is a very rare but annual visitor to the Trans-Pecos in summer, and this year's singles were at Balmorhea L., Reeves 27 Jun (RKO et al.) and at McNary Res. 23 Jul (VE, BZ). Two Franklin's Gulls were at Granger L., Williamson 15 Jun (TFe), and one was noted at Hornsby Bend, Travis 21–24 Jul (RKA, LF), both surprising summer records. A very early arriving Ring-billed Gull was at Sikes L., Wichita 25 Jul+ (Tmc, JMc). A first-summer Lesser Black-backed Gull at Bolivar Flats, Galveston 10 Jul+ (ph. CTL) represented the first summer-season record for Texas. A Caspian Tern on L. Livingston, Polk 15 Jun (CS) was early, and 2–8 on Gibbons Creek Res., Grimes 11–31 Jul (DPH) was a very good count. Common Terns of note included 3 at Lubbock 5–6 Jun (AF, JBr) and one at Gibbons Creek Res., Gibbons 31 Jul (DPH). There was a spate of summer records of Forster's Tern around the state, including singles at L. Somerville, Bursleson 19 Jun (CLi), near Cotton Center, Hale 7 Jul (JST), at L. Sweetwater, Nolen 24 Jul (JaP, LP), at L. Fort Phantom, Jones 25 Jul (LBl), at Lewisville L., Denton 29 Jul (KL), with 2 at Sikes L., Wichita 25 Jul (JMc). There were several interesting sightings of Least Terns in n.-cen. Texas: 2 at Richland Creek W.M.A., Freestone 19 Jun (PB), one at L. Waco, McLennan 24 Jun (EH), 2 at Dundee State Fish Hatchery, Archer 18 Jul, 9 at Iowa Park, Wichita 18 Jul (BG, GCo), and one at Lewisville L., Denton 29 Jul (KL). Four Black Terns were at Benbrook L., Tarrant 25 Jun (DPo), most unexpected in summer there. A Bridled Tern was seen on the 16 Jul pelagic out of South Padre I. (BMc et al.). Up to 6 Sooty Terns were regularly seen in Matagorda Bay, Calhoun 26 Jul+ (BFR).

PIGEONS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Perhaps the most astounding record of the sea-

son was the single Band-tailed Pigeon at Mont Belvieu, Chambers 2 Jun (ph. BFe), providing the 2nd record for the U.T.C. For reasons that are not readily apparent, Greater Roadrunners were reported with much greater frequency in the Central Brazos Valley than in previous seasons, and a single individual was near Hagar, Waller 24 Jul (FC), providing just the 3rd



Prior to the discovery of this first-summer Lesser Black-backed Gull at Bolivar Flats, Galveston County 10 July 2004 (here), there were no summer-season records of this species for Texas. Photograph by Gin-Ty Lee.

county record. What was believed to be a Northern Pygmy-Owl was heard calling in the Guadalupe Mts., Culberson 24 Jul (†RKO, BBe); surprisingly, Texas has just two well-documented records. Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls appear to be recolonizing the cen. Low-



This female Red Crossbill was discovered in a yard in Seguin, Guadalupe County, Texas on 1 June 2004. Its plumage was heavily worn, so much so that it could no longer fly; it was brought to a wildlife rehabilitator. Photograph by Greg Liscandro.

er Rio Grande Valley; in addition to the birds that have been present at Bentsen S.P. for the past two years, another pair was at nearby Chihuahua Woods Preserve, Hidalgo (JA). Up to 12 Burrowing Owls at a Prairie Dog town in Archer 18 Jul (BG, GCo) was a high number for that area. Only the 2nd reported nesting for the Panhandle, a Barred Owl nest with one young was discovered in Donley 5 Jun (BPI). The only Broad-billed Hummingbirds found this season were at the same location: an ad.

female was in the cen. Davis Mts, Jeff Davis 29 Jun+ and was joined by an imm. female 25 Jul+ (M&ME et al.). A female White-eared Hummingbird was also there 21–30 Jul (†M&ME, RPi). A Buff-bellied Hummingbird along Caney Cr., Matagorda 12 Jun (DS) was well e. of the known breeding range, while another in Austin 24 Jun (SR, BiB) was equally out of range but in an area where the species has been found regularly in recent years. Ad. male Allen's Hummingbirds appeared in Hays 19 Jul+ (ph. SS) and the Davis Mts. 25 Jul+ (M&ME, ML et al.). A Red-headed Woodpecker in Lubbock throughout the season (JST et al.) and another near Texline, Dallam 3 Jul (SC, MR) were well out of range. Up to 4 Hairy Woodpeckers were at the Plano Outdoor Learning Center, Collin during Jun (PA). Pileated Woodpeckers were noted near Hempstead, Waller 17 Jul (DVo) and in ne. Waller 24 Jul (FC), a county where the species is inexplicably rare.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH JAYS

Two male Olive-sided Flycatchers were vigorously singing in the cen. Davis Mts. 4 Jun (KB, ML, DaP), hinting at possible breeding. A notoriously late migrant, single Western Wood-Pewees were at Buffalo Lake, Randall 6 Jun (KS) and near Texline, Dallam 12 Jun (BPI). A solitary Eastern Wood-Pewee was along the Lampasas R. near Belton, Bell 11 Jul (RPi), where the species is not known to nest. An apparently late migrating Willow Flycatcher was discovered near Texline, Dallam 8–12 Jun (LSa, BPI), but no evidence of nesting could be discovered. A very late migrant Least Flycatcher was at Plano, Collin 17 Jun (PA), while one on w. Galveston I. 15 Jul (JSt) tied the early fall date for the U.T.C. Very early records for migrant *Empidonax* were provided by a Dusky Flycatcher at Ft. Bliss, El Paso 31 Jul (JPa, BZ) and a Cordilleran/Pacific-slope Flycatcher at the same location on 30 Jul (BZ); both provided first Jul records for the El Paso area. Buff-breasted Flycatchers once again nested at the Davis Mts. Preserve, with the nest located 10 Jun (KB) and 3 young fledged by early Jul. Interestingly, the pair moved 1.1 km from the location where the male was initially located during the spring; and perhaps equally surprisingly, only one pair has been found. Errant nesting Eastern Phoebes have been found in the Palo Duro Canyon S.P. of late, and this year four pairs nested (KS). Summer records of Eastern Phoebe in the cen. Brazos Valley continue to increase: this season, four singles were located in Madison and four others in Walker on a single B.B.S. route 20 Jun (DVo). Always a welcome sight, a Vermilion Flycatcher was near Shallowater, Lubbock 17 Jul (AF, AH), and

a pair was in Archer 18 Jul (GCo, BG), where nesting was suspected. The Dusky-capped Flycatchers reported during the spring at Big Bend remained until 17 Jul (m.ob.), although it is not clear that a pair was present during the summer. Two territorial male **Dusky-capped Flycatchers** were located in a remote canyon on the Davis Mts. Preserve, Jeff Davis 15 Jun (†KB, DaP et al.), and further investigation on 5 Jul revealed *three pairs* were present (†KB, ML)—an unprecedented occurrence in Texas.

It was a banner year for Great Kiskadee on the U.T.C., with 3 each in Port Arthur, Jefferson 27 Jul (CW) and in Baytown, Harris 29 Jul (HT, DCo), while 2 others continued through the period on the Katy Prairie, Harris. A very early migrant Cassin's Kingbird was found near Shallowater, Lubbock 17 Jul (AF, AH). A female Rose-throated Becard was observed briefly at Santa Margarita Ranch, Starr 6 Jun (†JA). A Yellow-throated Vireo at Big Bend's Boot Spring 29 Jun–21 Jul (T&BS, ML, BZ) provided a very unexpected first summer record for the park, as did a Red-eyed Vireo at Cottonwood Campground 20 Jul (VE, BZ). Two male Yellow-green Vireos were discovered at Sabal Palm Sanctuary, Cameron 7 Jun+ (†JA, m.ob.); at least one attracted a mate and successfully nested. Two imm. Green Jays made an unlikely appearance in Pasadena, Harris 29 Jul+ (HT, DCo). This species has been reported in this area several times over the past few years, and many believe the source of these birds to be a nearby flea market, where Green Jays have previously been for sale. The pair of Tamaulipas Crows and one fledgling that had been reported in the spring from Brownsville, Cameron remained in the area until 27 Jul (JO, m.ob.).

SWALLOWS THROUGH WARBLERS

Tree Swallows again nested at Granger L., Williamson, with 21 juvs. present 15 Jun (TFe). Cave Swallows were discovered occupying two roadside culverts near Justiceburg, Garza 13 Jun (PK); this is the same area where the species was discovered in 2002. Away from their typical canyon habitats, up to 9 Bushtits were at Buffalo Lake 13–14 Jul (KG, WH), and 4 were in Amarillo, Potter 31 Jul (LaS). A wandering Red-breasted Nuthatch was near Lorenzo, Crosby 15 Jul (RL). Perhaps resident in the area, White-breasted Nuthatches were reported 28 Jun at Hilltop L., Leon (BMA, JCo). A

Carolina Wren at Ft. Bliss 30–31 Jul (JPa, BZ) was the 5th for El Paso. A Sedge Wren was heard singing on the Katy Prairie, Harris 8 Jun (DaP), providing the 2nd summer record for the U.T.C. Four Blue-gray Gnatcatchers at High L., Galveston 25 Jul (DVe) set the early fall arrival date for the U.T.C. The **Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush** discovered at Pharr, Hidalgo during the spring remained through the period, to the delight of many traveling birders (JO, †m.ob.). Singing Wood Thrushes in areas where the species is not known to nest included singles at Houston, Harris 1–16 Jun (JGr), Gibbons Creek Res., Grimes 12 Jun (DPh), and White Rock L., Dallas 22 Jun (CR). Belatedly, we learned that the **Clay-colored Robin** at Lake Jackson, Brazoria was re-found 17 Apr and remained through the summer (TMo); one has to wonder whether it ever left. A pair of American Robins nested in Corpus Christi, Nueces—the first nesting record in many years (PY). A pair of Gray Catbirds successfully raised one young in Spring, Harris (D&SM), the first confirmed nesting for the U.T.C. This species was also reported from two Galveston locations, 5 & 18 Jun, as well as at Anahuac N.W.R., Chambers 20 Jun (DVe), indicating this species may nest elsewhere in the Region. Far w. of its normal summer range, a Brown Thrasher was at Muleshoe N.W.R., Bailey 31 Jul (AF, PK et al.). The long-present **Blue Mockingbird** in Pharr, Hidalgo continued to be seen irregularly until 17 Jul (JO). A pair of Phainopeplas at Independence Creek, Terrell 15 Jul (JMa) were just e. of the known breeding range.

A first-year male Tennessee Warbler in Pharr, Hidalgo 15 Jun (JA) was perplexing. A female Northern Parula feeding 2 fledglings at Granger L. 25 Jul (TFe) may have provided a first nesting record for Williamson. The male **Yellow Warbler** of the *erithachorides* ("Mangrove Warbler") group reported during the spring at Boca Chica, Cameron was last seen 5 Jun (TW). Four Yellow Warblers at Ft. Bliss 30 Jul (JPa) provided the first Jul record for El Paso. A late migrant Magnolia Warbler was at Sims Bayou, Harris 5 Jun (DS), but it was easily eclipsed by another near Abilene, Taylor 16 Jun (LM). Early migrant warblers were noted at two Trans-Pecos locations, providing first Jul records for several species, among these a Townsend's Warbler at Ft. Bliss 30 Jul (JPa) and

a Hermit Warbler at the same location 30–31 Jul (JPa, BZ) and single Black-throated Gray, Townsend's, and Hermit Warblers at Boot Spring, Brewster 31 Jul (CLY). A late Black-throated Green Warbler was in Anderson 4 Jun (CS). A Yellow-throated Warbler near Brenham, Washington 12 Jun (DVo) was a surprise there. A first Jul record for the South Plains was furnished by a Black-and-white Warbler at White River L., Crosby 24 Jul (AF, AH, JST, LV, HWu). Prothonotary Warbler has been suspected as breeding in the cen. Brazos Valley, and this season a pair was observed feeding at least 2 fledglings near Chappell Hill, Washington 2 Jun (DVo). A record-late Ovenbird was found dead following heavy storms in Dallas, Dallas 5 Jun (MAL). A late migrant Hooded Warbler was in Lubbock 5 Jun (AF). For the 3rd year in a row, Yellow-breasted Chats nested near White River L., Crosby (AF, AH).

TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

A male Scarlet Tanager at Ft. Davis 28 Jun (S&CK) was a great find. A singing Canyon Towhee in s.-cen. Throckmorton 18 Jul (BG, GCo) provided more evidence of a local population there. Over much of the South Plains, it was a bumper year for Grasshopper Sparrow (*vide* AF). An astounding find was 2 **White-throated Sparrows** at Memorial Oaks Park, Tarrant 19 Jun (GM), providing a 4th summer record for the state. Northern Cardinal is a casual visitor to El Paso; this season, a pair was present at one location through the season (BZ), and a male was present at another 21 Jun (JSp). Producing a first Jul record for the Austin area, a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was in Austin on 6 Jul (MBM). Very unexpected was a Black-headed Grosbeak in Taylor 15–17 Jun (JCa), and another was very early in Canyon, Randall 24 Jul (RM). Far e. of expected, a male Lazuli Bunting was on the Gene Howe W.M.A., Hemphill 26 Jun (BPi). The westward expansion of the Indigo Bunting continues, and the species' presence is becoming consolidated in several areas of the South Plains and s. Panhandle, including in Kent, Lubbock, Motley, Crosby, Bailey, and Randall. A male Varied Bunting at Hueco Tanks State Historic Site, El Paso 20 Jun (RH, BJ) was a nice find. A male Bronzed Cowbird in Clairmont 26 Jun (AF, MLe) was a first for Kent, while 2 others were observed at L. Six, Lubbock 20 Jun (AF). Following the discovery of a nesting pair of Red Crossbills in the Davis Mts. in the spring, juvs. were seen in several other locations, indicating more widespread breeding (KB). A very worn female Red Crossbill was found in Seguin, Guadalupe 1 Jun (GLi) and was taken to wildlife rehabilitator.

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SA The **Gray-crowned Yellowthroat** continued through the period at the Sabal Palm Sanctuary, Cameron (m.ob.). There has been some speculation that this bird could be a Common Yellowthroat x Gray-crowned Yellowthroat hybrid, based on song variation with this individual. However, the bird is a first-summer male, and there has been an obvious shift in the bird's song type, a change that would appear to be based on perceived competition with the local Common Yellowthroats. During Feb and Mar, the bird sang a typical Gray-crowned Yellowthroat song, but by Apr and May, it was singing an odd mix between the songs of a Gray-crowned and a Common. By midsummer, it was singing a very good imitation of a Common Yellowthroat song. Considering that Common Yellowthroats are known to learn their advertising songs, it appears that this individual abandoned the "correct" species-specific song and adopted the song of what it interpreted as its competition. Structurally and behaviorally, the bird appeared to be a typical Gray-crowned Yellowthroat in every way.

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State of the Region

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As a result of an agreement with the United States when Texas joined the Union, conservation actions in Texas are heavily dependent on private land initiatives: approximately 97% of the state is privately owned. In 1836, there was thus very little public land set aside, and the vast majority of the state's land area has been under some kind of agricultural use ever since.

Texas is an ecologically diverse state, with bird conservation issues unique to each of its ten physiographic regions (divided into eight Bird Conservation Regions and nine ecoregions by Texas Partners in Flight). An exhaustive list of the challenges in conserving natural heritage in Texas would span hundreds of pages, but there are three main issues that seem to be equally applicable to all regions of the state. The first is urbanization, as Texas has one of the most rapidly growing populations of any state. Much of the growth is focused in the IH 35 corridor, along the coastal prairies between the Louisiana border and Kingsville, and in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Although only about 5% of the state is considered to be under urban development, that percentage is growing, and urban/suburban sprawl is a significant concern in these areas. The second issue that faces the state as a whole is a function of population growth: competition for water resources. While urbanization may be perceived as a localized concern within the vastness of Texas, water is an issue that pits the needs of urban residents, agriculture, and industry against the basic requirements of ecological systems in the state—the very existence of many freshwater systems, including riparian corridors, the inflow of freshwater into saline estuaries, and so forth. The final statewide issue is the continued modification of natural habitats: Texas's history of land use means that very little of the state has not seen significant habitat modification since 1900. I will focus here on several areas familiar to birders, who visit the state in such large numbers that they may be said to have significant economic impact—enough to make the state government aware of the benefits of ecotourism and thus habitat conservation.

An area visited by thousands of bird enthusiasts each year, the Lower Rio Grande Valley confronts a variety of conservation problems, most of which come under the rubric of habitat modification. Agriculture was the primary industry in the region for much of the 1900s, and the rich soils of the Rio Grande Delta (what is generally referred to as "The Valley") were very prosperous for growing cotton and citrus in particular. Most of the Tamaulipan scrublands present away from the direct floodplain of the Rio Grande and the associated riparian woodlands of the river were removed for row crops. The construction of reservoirs along the Rio Grande has eliminated the flooding cycles that maintained those habitats. During the past two decades, agriculture has waned in extent, and urban/suburban sprawl is now the chief threat to what remains of these habitats. Though there exist fragments of habitat along the river corridor, many of these are in jeopardy. Arid-adapted species are becoming

more dominant, and the overall area of riparian woodlands has diminished. Nevertheless, there are long-term plans to increase the extent of native riparian habitat along corridors between Brownsville and Falcon Dam, and it is to be hoped that these plans bear fruit in years to come.

The Edwards Plateau, or Texas Hill Country, is characterized by mixed Ashe Juniper-hardwood woodlands that are the habitat of the endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler. Habitat fragmentation is a concern for the long-term population stability of this species, but another equally important factor that is less often highlighted is the continued recruitment of hardwoods in these forests. High populations of White-tailed Deer and exotic deer species result in increased browsing pressures in these woodlands, which are not a traditional habitat for the deer. Recent studies have shown that recruitment of oaks and other hardwoods in these mixed forests is well below what is needed to maintain the character of the forest. The long-term prognosis is higher and higher percentage of Ashe Juniper in the woodlands. This decreases the quality of the overall habitat from the standpoint of avian population dynamics. Enclosure experiments show that removing the browsing pressures allows the hardwoods to rebound rather quickly.



Nesting habitat of Golden-cheeked Warbler, an endangered, endemic breeder in the Texas Hill Country (Edwards Plateau, here at Colorado Bend State Park, 18 May 1994), has been steadily lost to development and fragmentation. Brood parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds (the nesting in the photograph) is not considered as serious a threat but is a concern where habitat quality has declined. Photograph by Mark W. Lockwood.

Grasslands are benefited, and maintained, by fire regimes. The suppression of fire, coupled with grazing pressures, generally allows woody plants to invade grasslands. This is certainly evident on the Coastal Prairies of Texas, where exotic species are spreading as well. Chinese Tallow (*Sapium sebiferum*) and Macartney Rose (*Rosa bracteata*) have become serious problems as invasive exotics because of their rapid growth and prolific reproductive potential. Tallow spreads quickly and has the potential to turn native prairie into a near monoculture in a few short years. Barrow and Renne (2001) report that tallow spread in Galveston County alone from just five acres in 1970 to over 30,000 in 2000. Everitt (2002) reports that Macartney Rose has become a severe range management problem on over 200,000 hectares of southeastern Texas. Universities and conservation groups are working on ways to control these exotic plants, and prescribed fire appears to have some successful application.

Although these are significant conservation challenges and there are many others, the picture for Texas is not all doom and gloom. There are conservation initiatives underway in all areas of this state. Demonstrable progress has been made over the past 50 years in habitat and bird conservation. Some of these programs have been species-specific, such as the reestablishment of breeding populations of Brown Pelicans along most of the coast from a single small breeding colony near Port Aransas in the late 1970s to over 3,500 nesting pairs today. Other actions have included conserving important stopover habitats along the coast, and there have been large-scale conservation lands acquired, such as The Nature Conservancy's Davis Mountains Preserve and associated conservation lands. Conservation in Texas is certainly moving forward thanks to the actions of a diverse group of people and organizations.

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