North American Birds Fall 2021 South Texas

Fall migration was lackluster especially compared to the previous year. Birders were a bit more relaxed with Covid being not as prevalent. Unfortunately the birds weren't there for us. Local and some wintering bird populations that were greatly reduced by the arctic blast in February added to the dearth of birds. The weather didn't help. It remained ridiculously warm well into winter.

Notable Observations:

Cackling Goose – Single Cackling Geese reported from Tiocano Lake Cameron Co 15 Nov (ph. Alex Lamoreaux et al), Atascosa Co 26 Nov (Christine Turnbull, Mariann Golden) and Nueces Co 30 Nov (ph. Michael Orgill) were good finds for South Texas.

Cinnamon Teal – A Cinnamon Teal seen at Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center Nueces Co 7 Aug (Martin Reid, Sheridan Coffey) was early.

Mallard – Mallard has become a scarce-to-rare winterer in South Texas, so up to seven birds present at a couple of Coastal Bend locations (Rik Brittain, Mel Cooksey, Skip Cantrell) in Nov along with three birds reported in Hidalgo Co 26 Nov (Tamie Bulow) were notable.

Mottled Duck – Twenty-one Mottled Ducks spotted at a seasonal pond in Frio Co 5 Sep (Jean Martin, Cinda Crosley) were notable for the inland location.

Ring-necked Duck – A flock of 8 Ring-necked Ducks spotted at Choke Canyon State Park McMullen Co 30 Sep (James Sipiora) was on the early side.`

Canvasback – Fourteen Canvasback reported from Green Lake Calhoun Co 29 Oct (Mary Meitzen, Dora Ann Ortego, Brent Ortego) were early.

Surf Scoter – A Surf Scoter was reported from Aransas NWR Aransas Co 28-29 Nov (Samuel Ares; ph. RJ Baltierra).

Black Scoter – A female Black Scoter was mixed in a flock of Ruddy Ducks on a playa in Willacy Co 12-26 Nov (ph. Javi Gonzalez; m. obs.). Another female was spotted flying north along the beach in Kleberg and Nueces Cos 27 Nov (ph. Jon McIntyre).

Long-tailed Duck – A Long-tailed Duck was spotted on Jones Lake at Aransas NWR Aransas Co 25 Nov (ph. Chris Harrison).

Bufflehead – A count of 150 Bufflehead made in Aransas Bay Aransas Co 20 Nov (Michael O'Brien, Louise Zematis et al) was impressive.

Common Goldeneye – A female Common Goldeneye that visited an ephemeral pond near Sandia Jim Wells Co 26-28 Nov (ph. Rik Brittain) was notable for the Brush Country location.

American Flamingo – An American Flamingo was discovered on a South Padre Island beach in Willacy Co (ph. Claudia Ramos) 16 Sep and then resurfaced at Laguna Atascosa NWR in Cameron Co 11-24 Oct (m. obs.). Adding to the individual's saga the bird visited the Norias Division of the King Ranch Kenedy Co 17 & 18 Nov (ph. Michael O'Brien et al).

Black-billed Cuckoo – A Black-billed Cuckoos reported from South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center Cameron Co 10 Aug (Javi Gonzalez) was very early.

Chuck-will's-widow – A Chuck-will's-widow seen at the Valley Land Fund Lots on South Padre Island Cameron Co 5 & 7 Nov (ph. Raymond VanBuskirk, Matt Hale, Michael Retter, Marianne Taylor) was on the late side.

Chimney Swift – A swarm of 700 Chimney Swifts was seen going to roost in a chimney tower at Oliveira Park in Brownsville Cameron Co 22 Sep (Deidre Herrington, Rick Weiman, Diane Korn). Five birds reported from Lake Casa Blanca International State Park Webb Co 7 Nov (Orange Sanchez, Irene Sanchez) were on the late side.

Broad-billed Hummingbird – An immature female Broad-billed Hummingbird visited National Butterfly Center feeders Hidalgo Co 22&23 Sep (ph. Peggy Rudman et al). A sharp-looking male was spotted at Hugh Ramsey Park in Harlingen Cameron Co 31 Oct (ph. Melissa McMasters).

Purple Gallinule – An immature Purple Gallinule reported from the Linda S. Castro Nature Sanctuary in Fulton Aransas Co 10 Nov (ph. Suzanne Hall) was late.

American Golden-Plover – A flock of 12 American Golden-Plovers seen near Progresso Lakes in Hidalgo Co 6 Aug (Dan Jones) was impressive for the number and date.

Wilson's Plover – A Wilson's Plover reported from Oso Bay Nueces Co 22 Nov (Michael O'Brien et al) was late.

Red Knot – A review of photographs of a large roosting flock of Red Knots on the mudflats north of the Convention Center on South Padre Island Cameron Co 21 Sep (Stephanie Bilodeau) yielded a count of 1,001 birds!

Sanderling – Two Sanderlings present at Falcon State Park Starr Co 22 Aug (ph. Simon Kiacz) was notable for the inland desert location.

Marbled Godwit – A Marbled Godwit observed in Colorado Co 16 Nov (ph. Wade Cortez) was well inland away from its' typical wintering habitat along the coast.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper – A Buff-breasted Sandpiper seen at the Dacosta Turf Farm in Matagorda Co 6 Oct was a bit late (Bob Friedrichs).

Pomarine Jaeger – At least two Pomarine Jaegers were encountered on the 30 Oct pelagic in Cameron Co while a single bird was reported at Big Southern Bank Kenedy Co 31 Oct (Dale Gawlik).

Long-tailed Jaeger – A juvenile Long-tailed Jaeger discovered on San Jose Island Aransas Co 23 Aug (ph. Andrew Orgill; Rylee Gonzales) was unfortunately later found dead.

Sabine's Gull – Sabine's Gull is always a treat to see in South Texas so an immature bird observed on Padre Island National Seashore Kleberg Co 10 Sep (ph. Justin LeClaire) and an adult spotted over the surf on South Padre Island Willacy Co 20 Sep (ph. Javi Gonzalez) added some zip to the fall season.

Laughing Gull – A count of 160 Laughing Gulls made at Falcon Lake Zapata Co 22 Aug (Simon Kiacz) is pretty impressive for well inland location.

Iceland Gull – Two 1st winter Iceland Gulls were encountered on Padre Island National Seashore Kleberg Co 21 Nov (ph. Willie Sekula; Derek Muschalek).

Lesser Black-backed Gull – Twelve 1st cycle Lesser Black-backed Gulls seen on San Jose Island Aransas Co 23 Aug (Jon McIntyre) were notable for the number and early fall date.

Caspian Tern – Impressive for inland locations were 27 Caspian Terns seen at Falcon State Park Starr Co 22 Aug (ph. Simon Kiacz) and 35 birds at Delta Lake Hidalgo Co 10 Nov (Jane Murtishaw, Jackie Farrell).

Black Tern – A massive number of feeding Black Terns were encountered just off the beach at Boca Chica in Cameron Co 8 Oct (Jack Stenger). Up to 50,000 terns were present.

Royal Tern – A count of 797 Royal Terns made on San Jose Island Aransas Co 12 Oct (Rylee Gonzales, Andrew Orgill) was impressive.

Arctic Tern – Outstanding was an Arctic Tern found amongst a flock of terns on the beach on South Padre Island in Cameron Co 5 Oct (ph. Javi Gonzalez).

Leach's Storm-Petrel – Two Leach's Storm-Petrels were identified out of a group of 3-4 storm petrels on an organized pelagic trip in Cameron Co offshore waters 14 Aug (ph. m.obs.).

Band-rumped Storm-Petrel – At least 11 Band-rumped Storm-Petrels seen in Cameron Co offshore waters on an organized pelagic trip 14 Aug (ph.; m.obs.) while only one bird was seen on a trip into Kenedy waters 18 Sep (m.obs.).

Cory's Shearwater – One Cory's Shearwaters was seen on the pelagic trip in Cameron Co 14 Aug (Garrett Hodne et al) while up to four birds were reported from the 18 Sep pelagic trip in Kenedy Co waters (m.obs.) and a lone bird was seen on offshore from South Padre Island Cameron Co 30 Oct (Ryan Rodriguez). Another lone bird was reported from a fishing trip offshore in Nueces Co waters 5 Nov (Jon McIntyre).

Manx Shearwater – A beached Manx Shearwater was picked up on Mustang Island Nueces Co and taken to the rehabilitation center in Port Aransas 29 Aug (ph. Andrew Orgill). Unfortunately the bird expired (specimen to TAMU).

Audubon's Shearwater – Up to seven Audubon's Shearwater was reported from an organized pelagic trip Cameron offshore waters 14 Aug (ph.; m.obs.).

Magnificent Frigatebird – Up to 100 Magnificent Frigatebirds reported from Charlies Pasture in Port Aransas Nueces Co 13 Sep (Kristi Thulin) was significant since it was not storm related.

Masked Booby – Numerous Masked Booby were reported from offshore waters on the three organized pelagic trips this fall, meanwhile onshore sightings included single birds at Port Aransas Nueces Co 23 Aug (Scott Atkinson), South Padre Island Cameron Co 17 Sep (Javi Gonzalez) and Boca Chica Cameron Co 9 Nov (Raymond VanBuskirk, Michael Retter).

Red-footed Booby – An immature Red-footed Booby shocked observers as it flew around the Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center in Port Aransas Nueces Co 17 Nov (ph. Lani Hyde, Laurie Sheppard). Intriguing was an adult bird reported being flushed off the water by fishermen in Matagorda waters 5 Sep (Greg Whittaker).

Little Blue Heron – A count of 234 Little Blue Herons made at Green Lake Calhoun Co 24 Aug (Brent Ortego, Dora Ann Ortego) was impressive.

Reddish Egret – A Reddish Egret reported from Lake Casa Blanca International State Park Webb Co 17 Oct (Wyatt Egelhoff) was well inland.

Hook-billed Kite – A Hook-billed Kite seen at Sabal Palm Sanctuary 14 Nov (Jeff Gordon et al) was a Cameron Co rarity.

Golden Eagle – Single Golden Eagles were reported from the Hazel Bazemore Hawkwatch Nueces Co 10 Sep and 17 Oct (Daniel Horton, Caroline Wolfe-Merritt).

Mississippi Kite – An impressive count of 6076 Mississippi Kites was made at the Hazel Bazemore Hawkwatch Nueces Co 26 Aug (Daniel Horton, Caroline Wolfe-Merritt). A lone bird reported from there 26 Oct was late.

Gray Hawk – A Gray Hawk reported from the Hazel Bazemore Hawkwatch Nueces Co 29 Oct (Daniel Horton) provided for a rare Coastal Bend record.

Broad-winged Hawk – The maximum number of Broad-winged Hawks on any one day this fall was 70,861 birds at Hazel Bazemore Park in Nueces Co 5 Oct (Caroline Wolfe-Merritt).

Ferruginous Hawk – Insanely early for South Texas was a Ferruginous Hawk reported from Hazel Bazemore Hawkwatch Nueces Co 22 Sep (Daniel Horton, Caroline Wolfe-Merritt). Two birds were reported from there also on 24 Sep (Daniel Horton).

Short-tailed Hawk – A light morph juvenile Short-tailed Hawk seen at Bentsen RGV State Park Hidalgo 4 Sep (ph. Ryan Rodriguez) along with a dark morph bird seen at Riverside Park Victoria Co 5 Oct (ph. Ted Goris) provided some needed excitement for the season.

Barred Owl – Two Barred Owls heard dueting at Lake Findley Jim Wells Co 18 Sep (Mike Stewart, Yvette Stewart) were away from the species usual haunts along the Nueces River drainage.

Short-eared Owl – A Short-eared Owl shocked birders on a pelagic trip far offshore in Cameron Co waters 30 Oct (ph. m. obs.).

Lewis's Woodpecker – A Lewis's Woodpecker present at Corpus Christi Naval Air Station Nueces Co 13-20 Nov (ph. Emma Mathis; m.obs.) provided for a significant first Coastal Bend record.

Red-bellied Woodpecker – A Red-bellied Woodpecker was reported from Aransas NWR Aransas Co 3 Sep (Samuel Ares).

Merlin – A Merlin reported from Hazel Bazemore Hawkwatch 24 & 25 Aug (Daniel Horton, Caroline Wolfe-Merritt) was incredibly early. A tally of 36 birds there on 4 Oct was impressive.

Prairie Falcon – The Hazel Bazemore Hawkwatch Nueces Co seemed to the epicenter of Prairie Falcon sightings this fall. Single birds were reported there 14 Sep (quite early), 19 Sep, 3 Oct, 5 Oct and 30 Oct (Daniel Horton et al).

Rose-throated Becard – A female Rose-throated Becard found 13 Nov (ph. Susan Foster et al) at Bentsen RGV State Park Hidalgo Co was joined by an immature male 18 Nov (m. obs). Both birds continued through the period.

Dusky-capped Flycatcher – A Dusky-capped Flycatcher visited Frontera Audubon in Weslaco Hidalgo Co 4-5 Nov (Alex Lamoreaux; ph. Bob Behrstock).

Ash-throated Flycatcher – An Ash-throated Flycatcher reported 15 Aug (Connor Wagner, Patrick James) from Resaca de la Palma S.P. Cameron Co may have been a post-breeding wanderer.

Brown-crested Flycatcher – A Brown-crested Flycatcher reported from Matagorda Co 15 Aug (Phyllis Frank, Tony Frank) may have been a post-breeding wanderer.

Social Flycatcher – An ultra-rare Social Flycatcher discovered on an RGV Birding Festival Field trip to UT Brownsville Cameron Co 10 Nov (Nathan Pieplow) proved to be frustrating for birders until it resurfaced 17 Nov (ph. Karl Berg). It continued delighting birders through the period.

Piratic Flycatcher – A rare Piratic Flycatcher made a brief stop at Resaca de la Palma State Park Cameron Co 29 Aug (ph. Mark Esparza).

Eastern Kingbird – An Eastern Kingbird seen at Valley Land Fund Lot on South Padre Island 15 Aug (Bill Beaty) along with another bird seen along Old Port Isabel Road 16 Aug (ph. Kristy Reske-Gallo) were early for Cameron Co while a bird reported from Brownsville 22 Nov (Daniel Horton) was really late.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher – A Fork-tailed Flycatcher was spotted with Scissor-tailed Flycatchers at Valley Land Fund Lots on South Padre Island Cameron Co 4 Oct (ph. Joanne Mozynski). Another Fork-tailed Flycatcher excited birders at San Benito Wetlands Cameron Co 14 Nov+ (ph. Toni Bowen; m. obs.).

Olive-sided Flycatcher – An Olive-sided Flycatcher observed at Oso Bay Wetlands Preserve in Corpus Christi Nueces Co 3 Aug (ph. Ruben Ayala) was very early. Another bird reported from Estero Llano Grande State Park Hidalgo Co 7 Aug (ph. John Yochum) was early.

Acadian Flycatcher – An immature Acadian Flycatcher present at Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center in Port Aransas Nueces Co 31 Oct – 7 Nov (ph. Willie Sekula et al) was a late lingerer.

Alder Flycatcher – A calling Alder Flycatcher detected in Matagorda Co 3 Nov (Robyn Savage) was late.

Yellow-green Vireo – A Yellow-green Vireo observed at Aransas NWR Aransas Co 29 Aug (Willie Sekula) was the only one reported in South Texas this fall.

Blue Jay – A Blue Jay reported sporadically 15 Aug – 14 Nov (ph. Joe Villareal et al) from the Calliham Unit of Choke Canyon State Park McMullen Co was well west and south of the species' usual haunts.

Purple Martin – The Harlingen Purple Martin roost in Cameron Co peaked with 10,000 birds 5 Aug (Sue Griffin, Teanna Neskora).

Cave Swallow – Cave Swallows took a beating with the arctic storm last February so the 650 birds that were reported from the Hazel Bazemore Hawkwatch Nueces Co 14 Sep (Daniel Horton) provided some encouraging news.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet – Amazing was a concentration of 60+ Ruby-crowned Kinglets at Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center Nucces Co 30 Oct (Mel Cooksey).

Cedar Waxwing – A group of seven Cedar Waxwings observed in Corpus Christi Nueces Co 17 Sep (ph. Drake Schulz) was quite early for the location.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher – A count of 154 and 203 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers made from the Hazel Bazemore Hawkwatch Platform, *Nueces* 3 & 8 Sep respectively (Daniel Horton) was nice since this species took a huge hit with the arctic blast the previous winter.

Curve-billed Thrasher – A Curve-billed Thrasher found at Packery Channel Nueces Co 30 Oct (ph. Mel Cooksey) was an oddity for the barrier island.

Sage Thrasher – Single Sage Thrashers visited South Padre Island Cameron Co 5 Nov (ph. Michael Retter; Matt Hale, Raymond VanBuskirk) and San Benito Wetlands Cameron Co 18 Nov (Tamie Bulow).

Mountain Bluebird – A Mountain Bluebird seen at Charlie's Pasture Nueces Co 12 Nov (ph. David Sikes) was the only one reported this fall unlike last year when numerous birds came into South Texas.

American Goldfinch – An American Goldfinch that visited a Corpus Christi yard in Nueces Co 16 Sep (ph. Ruben Ayala) was very early.

Lapland Longspur – A calling Lapland Longspur alerted participants to its presence as it flew south along the beach close to a RGV Birding Festival field trip at Boca Chica Cameron Co 14 Nov (Marky Mutchler, Raul Garza, Willie Sekula). It provided for a very rare LRGV record.

Lark Sparrow – Over a hundred Lark Sparrows encountered in Dimmit Co 11 Oct (Jay Packer, Amy Packer) was impressive.

Hooded Oriole – A male Hooded Oriole observed in Three Rivers Live Oak Co 4 Oct (ph. Martin Reid, Sheridan Coffey) was late for the location.

Common Grackle – Up to 60 Common Grackles reported from a cemetery in Raymondville Willacy Co (Ron Weeks et al; ph. Dan Jones) was a good number for the southerly location.

Rusty Blackbird – A nice find for Brush Country was a Rusty Blackbird present at an ephemeral pond on Knolle Ranch Jim Wells Co 26 Nov (ph. Rik Brittain).

Mourning Warbler – A Mourning Warbler documented on an organized pelagic trip about 30 miles offshore in Cameron Co waters 30 Oct (ph. Bill Eisele; m. obs) was a bit shocking since this species is thought to be strictly a circum-Gulf migrant.

Hooded Warbler – A male Hooded Warbler seen at Pollywog Pond Nueces Co 8 Aug (Stephen Cook) was early for Corpus Christi.

American Redstart – A female American Redstart reported from Goliad State Park Goliad Co 28 Nov (Amy Packer, Jay Packer) was late for the inland location.

Cape May Warbler –Rare for fall Cape May Warblers included an immature bird at the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center Cameron Co 13-15 Sep (ph. Mark Hinton; m.obs.), a female reported from Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center Nueces Co 26-29 Sep (ph. Andrew Orgill, Rylee Gonzales; m. obs.) and up to two birds present at the Convention Center on South Padre Island 29 Oct – 11 Nov (ph. Carter Crouch et al).

Bay-breasted Warbler – Single Bay-breasted Warblers were reported from Nueces Co at Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center 2 Nov (David Dyer) and Packery Channel 5 Nov Caroline Wolfe-Merritt) while another bird was seen further south at the South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center Cameron Co 12 Nov (ph. Michelle Cano).

Blackburnian Warbler – Eleven Blackburnian Warblers seen along the road to the Fisheries Field Station Cameron Co 12 Sep (Julian Salinas) was impressive for this scarce fall migrant but that number was blown away by the dizzying tally of at least 23 birds seen in the oaks at Rosehill Cemetery in Corpus Christi Nueces Co 14 Sep (Mel Cooksey)!

Black-throated Blue Warbler – A male Black-throated Blue Warbler visited South Padre Island Birding and Nature Center Cameron Co 13-15 Oct (ph. Javi Gonzalez) while a female dropped in there 21 Oct (ph. Mary Beth Stowe). Another male was seen at Leonabelle Turnbull Birding Center in Nueces Co 2 Nov (ph. Kevin Cochran; m. obs.).

Prairie Warbler – At least ten Prairie Warblers were seen at South Texas locations this fall with the latest bird reported from South Padre Island Convention Center Cameron Co 1 Nov (John Yochum).

Black-throated Gray Warbler – A spiffy male Black-throated Gray Warbler seen at Wesley Seale Dam San Patricio Co 7 Nov (ph. Skip Cantrell) was probably a late migrant.

Golden-crowned Warbler – A Golden-crowned Warbler was found on an RGV Bird Festival field trip at Valley Nature Center in Weslaco Hidalgo Co 11 Nov (Shawneen Finnegan, Dave Irons; ph. m.obs.). It continued through the period.

Canada Warbler – A Canada Warbler seen at the South Padre Island Valley Land Fund Lot Cameron Co 23 Nov (ph. Susan Strasevicz, Thomas St. Pierre) was very late.

Crimson-collared Grosbeak – Unlike last fall only one Crimson-collared Grosbeak showed up this year – a female at Quinta Mazatlan found on a RGV Birding Festival field trip 12 Nov (Willie Sekula et al). The bird continued to excite birds through the period.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak – A Rose-breasted Grosbeak seen at Duval County Park 9 Nov (ph. Daniel Horton) was on the late side for the inland location.

Blue Grosbeak – A female Blue Grosbeak reported from Beeville Bee Co 31 Oct (ph. Jim Highberger) was late for the inland location.

Indigo Bunting – An Indigo Bunting seen along Guadalupe River Road Refugio Co 27 Aug (Tony Frank, Mark Scheuerman) seemed out of place for the early date.

Lazuli Bunting – A male Lazuli Bunting was spotted at San Ygnacio Bird Sanctuary Zapata Co 3 Oct (ph. Trevor Sleight).

Dickcissel – A Dickcissel found at Americana RV Resort Hidalgo Co 19 Nov (ph. Robert Martinez) was late.

Cited Observers

Samuel Ares

Scott Atkinson

Ruben Ayala

RJ Baltierra

Bill Beaty

Bob Behrstock

Karl Berg

Stephanie Bilodeau

Toni Bowen

Rik Brittain

Tamie Bulow

Michelle Cano

Skip Cantrell

Anne Casella

Kevin Cochran

Sheridan Coffey

Stephen Cook

Mel Cooksey

Wade Cortez

Cinda Crosley

Carter Crouch

David Dyer

Wyatt Egelhoff

Shawneen Finnegan

Bill Eisele

Mark Esparza

Jackie Farrell

Bob Friedrichs

Susan Foster

Phyllis Frank

Tony Frank

Raul Garza

Dale Gawlik

Daic Gawiik

Mariann Golden

Rylee Gonzales

Javi Gonzalez

Jeff Gordon

Ted Goris

Sue Griffin

Matt Hale

Suzanne Hall

Chris Harrison

Pat Heirs

Deidre Herrington

Jim Highberger

Mark Hinton

Garrett Hodne

Daniel Horton

Lani Hyde

Dave Irons

Patrick James

Dan Jones

Simon Kiacz

Diane Korn

Alex Lamoreaux

Justin LeClaire

Jon McIntyre

Melissa McMasters

Jean Martin

Robert Martinez

Emma Mathis

Mary Meitzen

Joanne Mozynski

Jane Murtishaw

Derek Muschalek

Marky Mutchler

Teanna Neskora

Michael O'Brien

Andrew Orgill

Michael Orgill

Brent Ortego

Dora Ann Ortego

Amy Packer

Jay Packer

Nathan Pieplow

Claudia Ramos

Martin Reid

Kristy Reske-Gallo

Michael Retter

Peggy Rudman

Thomas St. Pierre

Julian Salinas

Orange Sanchez

Irene Sanchez

Mark Scheuerman

Drake Schulz

Laurie Sheppard

David Sikes

James Sipiora

Trevor Sleight

Jack Stenger

Mike Stewart

Yvette Stewart

Mary Beth Stowe

Susan Strasevicz

Marianne Taylor

Kristi Thulin

Christine Turnbull

Raymond VanBuskirk

Joe Villareal

Connor Wagner

Ron Weeks

Rick Weiman

Greg Whittaker

Caroline Wolfe-Merritt

John Yochum

Louise Zematis