

Winter 2005/2006 ABA Report – Panhandle and Southern High Plains

by Anthony Hewetson

The drought remained horrible throughout the region this past winter, making for a very slow season for water-dependant birds, the rodent crop started dwindling, reducing the numbers of raptors from notable levels, and the seeds, berries, and insects appeared to be either very dry or in short supply making for a lousy season of songbirding.

Waterfowl through Waders

Brant – One at Duck Pond in Plainview, *Hale*, 14 Jan (JB) was well-photographed and represented the sixth record for the Southern High Plains.

Trumpeter Swan – 2 adults and 3 immatures at Turkey Track Ranch, *Hutchinson*, 26-31 Dec (BP, LB) were well photographed, one near Childress, *Childress*, 19 Jan (DS) was a solid report by a TPWD official.

Tundra Swan – 2 at Lake Meredith, *Hutchinson*, 11 Jan (BP) and one at Greenbelt Lake, *Donley*, 14 Jan (IO, BMC) were the only reports for the entire region.

Blue-winged Teal – One at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey*, 18 Dec (AH) was the first December record for the Southern High Plains; one at Lake Meredith, *Hutchinson*, 29 Dec (RM) and one at Turkey Track Ranch, *Hutchinson*, 31 Dec (BP) were the seventh and eighth winter records for the Panhandle; 20 on the Quanah CBC, Hardeman, 7 Jan (SW) seems an unusually high number for so far north.

Greater Scaup – One at Leroy Elmore Park, *Lubbock*, 10 Dec (AH), one at Huneke Park, *Lubbock*, 20 Dec (AH), one at Lake Meredith, *Hutchinson*, 29-31 Dec (BP, MR), one at Lake Meredith, *Hutchinson*, 21 Jan (BB), one at Whisperwood Pond, *Lubbock*, 26 Jan (AH), and one at the Matador Sewage Ponds, *Motley*, 11 Feb (AH) probably represent increased observer confidence rather than a genuine increase in incidence.

Long-tailed Duck – One at Thompson Park, *Potter*, 21 Feb (BMu) one of less than ten records for the Panhandle.

Red-throated Loon – 2 at Lake Meredith, *Hutchinson*, 31 Dec-31 Jan (BP, BMC, LS, BB, KS) represented the third record for the Panhandle.

Pacific Loon – One at Lake Meredith, *Hutchinson*, 21 Jan (BB) represented the eighth record for the Panhandle.

Eared Grebe – 22 on the Lubbock CBC, *Lubbock*, 17 Dec (CS) represented a very high number for winter on the Southern High Plains.

American White Pelican – 2 at Dupree Park, *Lubbock*, 7 Dec (GJ) and one at Leroy Elmore Park, *Lubbock*, 20 Dec (AH) were the second and third December records for the Southern High Plains.

Great Egret – One at Maxey Park, *Lubbock*, 1 Dec-28 Feb (AH, mob) and one along the Canyon Lakes, *Lubbock*, 1 Dec-28 Feb (TS, mob) represented the second and third overwintering records for the entire region. One at Dupree Park, *Lubbock*, persisted through 10 Dec (FR, CRo), 2 at Clapp Park, *Lubbock*, persisted through 17 Dec (AH, AvH), and one at White River Lake, *Crosby*, persisted through 31 Dec (BB) as potential overwinterers.

Snowy Egret – 2 at Maxey Park, *Lubbock*, persisting through 8 Dec (AH) provided the third December record for the entire region.

Black-crowned Night Heron – One at Buffalo Lake NWR, *Randall*, 2 Dec (BB) was the tenth winter record for the Panhandle.

Raptors through Gulls

Osprey – One at Ransom Lake, *Lubbock*, persisting through 17 Dec (RL, CRe) provided the first December record since 1985.

Harris's Hawk – One at White River Lake, *Crosby*, 17 Dec (CS, JST) and one north of Lubbock, *Lubbock*, 22 Feb (DT) provided records of this increasingly rare species.

Red-shouldered Hawk – One at Lake Six, *Lubbock*, 26 Dec (TS) provided the second December record for the Southern High Plains.

Peregrine Falcon – One in Amarillo, *Potter*, 4 Dec (BP), one at the Lubbock Cemetery, *Lubbock*, 17 Dec (PK, mob), one at Buddy Holly Park, *Lubbock*, 26 Dec (TS), one at White River Lake, *Crosby*, 31 Dec (AH), one in south Lubbock, *Lubbock*, 27-28 Jan (DT, AH), and one at TTU HSC, *Lubbock*, 13-28 Feb (AH) made for an exciting winter. The status of this species in our region is poorly understood.

Sandhill Crane – Generally occurs in good numbers throughout the region in winter but a peak of 150,000 reported from Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey*, 10 Jan (HB) represented the highest numbers in decades.

Spotted Sandpiper – One at Lake Meredith, *Hutchinson*, 29 Dec (LS) and one at Greenbelt Lake, *Donley*, 1 Jan (IO) represented the second and third winter reports for the Panhandle. One at Buffalo Springs Lake, *Lubbock*, 28 Jan (TT, mob) represented the second January record for the Southern High Plains.

Long-billed Curlew – 2 near Slaton, *Lubbock*, 29 Dec (AH) was the ninth December record for the Southern High Plains and 5 along the Pease River, *Motley*, 11 Feb (AH) was the third February record for the Southern High Plains.

Western Sandpiper – One at Lake Meredith, *Hutchinson*, 8 Jan (BP) and 21 Jan (BP) would represent the second and third winter records for the Panhandle – if distinct birds.

Dunlin – One at Lake Meredith, *Hutchinson*, 8 Jan-25 Feb (BP) represented the second winter record for the Panhandle.

Bonaparte's Gull – not particularly notable either to the north nor to the south of the Southern High Plains in winter, up to 5 along the Canyon Lakes, *Lubbock*, 3-11 Dec (PK, AH) provided only the fifth December record for the Southern High Plains.

Lesser Black-backed Gull – One at Lake Meredith, *Hutchinson*, 11 Jan-21 Jan (BP, BB) represented the first record for the Panhandle.

Great Black-backed Gull – **The bird of the season**; one at Lake Meredith, *Hutchinson*, 26 Dec-21 Jan (BP, LB, BB, photos) represented the first record for the Panhandle.

Forster's Tern – 2 at Greenbelt Lake, *Donley*, 14 Jan (BMc, mob) represented the first winter record for the Panhandle.

Pigeons through Woodpeckers

Barn Owl – Record numbers of this species occurred throughout the region as reflected by 21 on the Lubbock CBC, *Lubbock*, 17 Dec (fide AH), 5 on the Muleshoe NWR CBC, *Bailey*, 18 Dec (fide AH), and 31 on the White River Lake CBC, *Crosby/Dickens*, 31 Dec (fide AH).

Barred Owl – 3 on the Quanah CBC, *Hardeman*, 7 Jan (SW) were very close to the western edge of the species' distribution.

Long-eared Owl – A good winter for the species on the Southern High Plains as reflected by one on the Lubbock CBC, *Lubbock*, 17 Dec (fide AH) and 5 on the White River Lake CBC, *Crosby/Dickens*, 31 Dec (fide AH).

Short-eared Owl – 11 reported from the White River Lake CBC, *Crosby/Dickens*, 31 Dec (fide AH) represented a very high number for the Southern High Plains.

Rufous Hummingbird – One male in Lubbock, *Lubbock*, persisting through 17 Dec (JD) represented the fifth December record for the Southern High Plains.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker – One at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey*, 18 Dec (AH, AvH) was far west of the species usual haunts in winter.

Red-naped Sapsucker – One on the Amarillo CBC, *Randall*, 17 Dec (PT, mob) and one on the Lubbock CBC, *Lubbock*, 17 Dec (PK, mob) provided rare winter records for the region.

Hairy Woodpecker – 5 on the Quanah CBC, *Hardeman*, 7 Jan (SW) were very close to the western edge of the species' distribution.

Flycatchers through Swallows

Gray Flycatcher – One at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey*, 4 Feb (AH, AvH) represented the first February record for the Southern High Plains.

Black Phoebe – One at Ceta Canyon, *Randall*, 9 Dec (RM) represented the third December record for the Panhandle.

Say's Phoebe – One at Buffalo Lake NWR, *Randall*, 2-24 Dec (KS, JC) represented a rare winter sighting for the Panhandle.

Cassin's Kingbird – A well-reported sighting (ruling out both Western and Tropical/Couch's Kingbirds) of one at MacKenzie Park, *Lubbock*, 26 Dec (TS) represented the first winter record for the entire region.

Common Raven – While not unexpected in the Panhandle during the winter, six reports of one-2 throughout the period (AH, AvH) from *Kent, Garza, Dickens, Crosby, and Motley* further document the resurgence of this species in the Southern High Plains.

Titmice through Warblers

White-breasted Nuthatch – One at Palo Duro Canyon SP, *Randall*, 10-11 Dec (RM), 3 during the Amarillo CBC, *Potter*, 17 Dec (PT, mob), one at Palo Duro Canyon SP, *Randall*, 5 Feb (LS), and one at Lake Meredith, *Hutchinson*, 16 Feb (PB) represented a good winter for the Panhandle. One at Yoakum County Park, *Yoakum*, 18 Feb (AH) was a first county record.

Cactus Wren – One in Amarillo, *Potter*, 6 Dec (PA) and one in *Randall*, 18-19 Feb (AB, SB) represented rare winter reports for the region.

Western Bluebird – 2 at Palo Duro Canyon SP, *Randall*, 22 Dec (KS) represented an unusually eastern sighting for the region.

Gray Catbird – One at Palo Duro Canyon SP, *Randall*, 17 Dec-11 Feb (PT, KS) and one in Lubbock, *Lubbock*, 17 Dec (AvH, mob) represented further evidence that wintering attempts by this species are increasing in the region.

Orange-crowned Warbler – one in Amarillo, *Potter*, 21 Dec-10 Jan (KS) and one at Lake Meredith, *Potter*, 29 Dec (RM) represented the eighth and ninth winter records for the Panhandle.

Pine Warbler – One in Amarillo, *Potter*, 1 Dec-1 Feb (KS) represented the second winter record for the Panhandle.

Tanagers through Finches

Green-tailed Towhee – One at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey*, 18 Dec (ST, mob) represented the fourth December record for the Southern High Plains.

Cassin's Sparrow – One at White River Lake, *Crosby*, 21 Jan (LP, mob) and 2 at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey*, 4 Feb (AH, AvH) represented the first winter records for the Southern High Plains since 1996.

Grasshopper Sparrow – One near Morton, *Cochran*, 18 Dec (AH) represented the second December record for the region and 2 near Mound Lake, *Terry*, 18 Feb (AH) the third February record for the region.

Le Conte's Sparrow – One at Palo Duro Canyon SP, *Randall*, 17 Dec-25 Jan (PT, mob) and one at Clapp Park, *Lubbock*, 17 Dec (AH) were the only winter reports of this intriguing species.

Fox Sparrow – One-3 at Palo Duro Canyon SP, *Randall*, 17 Dec-5 Feb (PT, KS, LS) provided sightings of a species rare to the Panhandle.

Swamp Sparrow – 2 at Lake Rita Blanca, *Hartley*, 21 Jan (BB) provided a nice sighting of a species very rare to the Panhandle.

Rusty Blackbird – One at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey*, 18 Dec (AH) represented the fifth December record for the Southern High Plains.

Observers

PA – Peggy Acord
LB – Lynn Barber
HB – Harold Beierman
AB – Adam Berg
SB – Sarah Berg
BB – Brandon Best
JB – Jason Brook
JC – Joe Cepeda
JD – Jewel Downing
AH – Anthony Hewetson
AvH – Aveline Hewetson
GJ – George Jury
PK – Phillip Kite
RL – Rob Lee

RM – Ray Matlack
BMc – Bill McKinney
BMu – Bill Murphy
IO – Irene Oatman
LP – Laura Packer
BP – Barrett Pierce
MR – Martin Reid
CRe – Cindy Reinhardt
CRo – Clarice Robertson
FR – Floyd Robertson
LS – Laura Sare
KS – Ken Seyffert
TS – Tom SoRelle
CS – Cliff Stogner
DS – Danny Swepston
DT – Debbie Tennyson
ST – Susan Tomlinson
PT – Peggy Trosper
TT – Tom Trost
JST – Jo-Szu Tsai
SW – Steve Welborn