

Spring 2006 ABA Report - Panhandle and Southern High Plains

by Anthony Hewetson

Spring was just plain dry - everywhere in the region! Shorebird migration was borderline pitiful with few observations of note. Most waterfowl left early, as did most gulls, and most waders have wandered in slowly and at low to very low numbers. Spring songbird migration was different from that of last year - in that all taxonomic groups, including the grosbeak/bunting clan, were low to very low. Contopids, empids, thrushes, warblers, tanagers, and grosbeaks/bunting - low. Vireos - almost nonexistent. This pattern will continue to prevail, I suspect, as long as a) drought continues and b) we continue to have springs without big fronts.

Early arrival dates continue to amaze - many species can now be found in March (that used to arrive or pass through in April) or April (that used to arrive or pass through in May) - something seems to be going on and I wish I had the time and skill to do a statistical workup. The other big news - ongoing expansions (White-tailed Kites, Bronzed Cowbirds) and establishments (Yellow-breasted Chats, Field Sparrows, Indigo Buntings, Bronzed Cowbirds).

Waterfowl through Waders

Greater White-fronted Goose - One late bird near Mayfield, *Hale* 4 Mar (AH, AvH) - late; only the sixth March record for the Southern High Plains.

Cackling Goose - Of interest due to the recent split, 17 noted at Lake Six, *Lubbock* 20 May (BB) - the latest date for a flock in the Southern High Plains.

Bufflehead - One at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey* 6 May (BB) - very late; only the third May record for the Southern High Plains.

Hooded Merganser - 2 at Gene Howe WMA, *Hemphill* 20 May (BR) - a very late date for the Panhandle.

Red-breasted Merganser - 3 at Buffalo Springs Lake, *Lubbock* 4 Mar (BB) - late, only the fifth March record for the Southern High Plains.

Western Grebe - 6 including a courting pair at Cactus Playa, *Moore* 8 Apr (BP) - very rare for the Panhandle.

American White Pelican - 9 at Palo Duro Lake, *Hansford* 26 Mar (RC) - a high number for any site in the region.

Brown Pelican - One immature at Buffalo Springs Lake, *Lubbock* 23 Apr (CS) - accidental in the region; only the seventh report for the Southern High Plains and a first for April.

Great Egret - One at MacKenzie Park, *Lubbock* through 28 Mar (BB, AH) - the second winter in a row that individuals of this species have successfully overwintered.

Black Vulture - 3 amidst a large flock of Turkey Vultures over Maxey Park, *Lubbock* 9 Apr (AH, AvH) - accidental in the region; the ninth report for the Southern High Plains and the first report of multiple birds.

Raptors through Terns

White-tailed Kite - A pair near Girard, *Kent* 25 Feb-5 Mar (JW, AH) represented the ninth record for the Southern High Plains and one near Wayside, Armstrong 28 Apr (RM, photos) was the first record for the Panhandle.

Broad-winged Hawk - One in *Donley* 29 Apr (BP) - a most unusual spring report for the region.

Peregrine Falcon - One at Palo Duro Lake, *Hansford* 26 May (LS) - a very late report for the Panhandle, this sighting would not be particularly notable in the Southern High Plains.

Prairie Falcon - One at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey* 6 May (BB) - formerly considered accidental for the region in May, this species now lingers into early May every year.

Snowy Plover - 6 at White River Lake, *Crosby* 18 Mar (BB), one at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey* 25 Mar (BB), and one at Earl Crow Park, *Lubbock* 28 Mar (BB) - the eighth, ninth, and tenth March records for the Southern High Plains.

Piping Plover - One at Cactus Playa, *Moore* 22 Apr (BP, photos) - accidental for the region; the third report for the Panhandle.

Mountain Plover - 10-16 near Pantex, *Carson* 21-23 Mar (JR, DW) - first record for Carson County.

Solitary Sandpiper - One at MacKenzie Park, *Lubbock* 28 Mar (BB) - early; only the third March record for the Southern High Plains.

Willet - 2 at Cactus Playa, *Moore* 6 May (BP) - very rare during spring migration for the Panhandle.

Whimbrel - 8 at Greenbelt Reservoir, *Donley* 14 May (BP, photos) - very rare during spring migration in the Panhandle and an unusually high number.

Sanderling - 3 at Cactus Playa, *Moore* 6 May and 13 May (BP) and 2 at Cactus Playa, *Moore* 16 May (KS) - very rare during spring migration in the Panhandle; less than a dozen records.

Dunlin - One at Cactus Playa, *Moore* 22 Apr (BP, photos) - very rare during spring migration in the Panhandle; less than a dozen records.

Short-billed Dowitcher - One at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey* 1 Apr (BB) and 4 near Post, *Garza* 8 Apr (AH) the only reports for the spring - considered very rare but may be more common than thought.

Franklin's Gull - 3 at White River Lake, *Crosby* 18 Mar (BB) - formerly considered accidental in March; this is the sixth year in a row for March records in the Southern High Plains.

California Gull - One at White River Lake, *Crosby* 13 May (BB) - accidental for the region; the fourth record for the Southern High Plains; the first for the county, and the first May record.

Forster's Tern - One at Lake Marvin, *Hemphill* 5 Mar (LS) - very early; the first March record for the Panhandle.

Pigeons through Woodpeckers

Black-billed Cuckoo - One at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey* 6 May (BB) - a very rare migrant through the region; the ninth record for the Southern High Plains.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo - One near Lehman, *Cochran* 13 Apr (AH), one at Lake Six, *Lubbock* 29 Apr (AH), and one at White River Lake, *Crosby* 30 Apr (AH) - early; the second, third, and fourth April records for the Southern High Plains.

Long-eared Owl - One at Clapp Park, *Lubbock* 30 Mar (KSc) the ninth March record for the Southern High Plains, one at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey* 8 Apr (BB) the sixth April record for the Southern High Plains, and one in Lubbock, *Lubbock* 9 May (BB) the second May record for the Southern High Plains - a weird spate of late records.

Common Nighthawk - One over Lubbock, *Lubbock* 30 Apr (BB) - early; the fourth April record for the Southern High Plains.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird - One in a Lubbock yard, *Lubbock* 28 Apr (CB) - accidental in the region; the fourth April record for the Southern High Plains.

Black-chinned Hummingbird - One in a Lubbock yard, *Lubbock* 11 Mar (EM) - the earliest spring date ever for the Southern High Plains.

Broad-tailed Hummingbird - One in a Lubbock yard, *Lubbock* 11 Apr (AH, AvH) - early; the third April record for the Southern High Plains.

Red-bellied Woodpecker - A courting pair at Lake Tanglewood, *Randall* 5 Mar (TJ) - far west of usual haunts in the Panhandle.

Red-naped Sapsucker - One at Palo Duro Canyon SP, *Randall* (LS) - very rare; only the third March record for the Panhandle.

Flycatchers through Swallows

Eastern Wood Pewee - One singing and defending a territory in the Turkey Creek drainage, *Motley* 13 May (AH) could not be relocated on later dates - a rare migrant through the region and suspected breeder, not yet confirmed, in the eastern counties; the 18th record for the Southern High Plains.

Black Phoebe - One at the Crossbar Ranch, *Potter* 10 Mar (RM) - accidental; only the third March record for the Panhandle.

Western Kingbird - One in a Lubbock yard, *Lubbock* 28 Mar (AH) - formerly not expected to arrive until April; late March arrivals to Southern High Plains now typical.

Northern Shrike - One in *Hemphill* 5 Mar (LS) - very rare; eighth March record for the Panhandle.

Bell's Vireo - A nesting pair in the Turkey Creek drainage, *Motley* 13 May (AH) - a very rare breeder in the Southern High Plains - first solid attempt in four years.

Tree Swallow - 5 exploring snags at Greenbelt Lake, *Donley* 14 May (BP) - a very rare breeder in the Panhandle.

Cave Swallow - 4 adults at a culvert with active nests near the Hood Ranch, *Garza* 8 Apr (AH) - the fourth year in a row for nesting in this area.

Barn Swallow - One at Lake Meredith, *Moore* 19 Mar (BP) - a very early record for the Panhandle.

Titmice through Warblers

Sedge Wren - One at Buffalo Springs Lake, *Lubbock* 4 Mar (BB) - a very rare winterer in the region; the fifth March record for the Southern High Plains.

Western Bluebird - One at Palo Duro Canyon SP, *Randall* 11 Mar (BSu) - well east of expected haunts in the Panhandle.

Sage Thrasher - One at Justiceburg Cemetery, *Garza* 8 Apr (AH) - formerly considered accidental for the region in April; the fourth consecutive April record for the Southern High Plains.

Sprague's Pipit - 2 at the Anderson Ranch, *Armstrong* 22 Apr (JM) - very rare in the Panhandle and a first county record.

Phainopepla - One male in Clarendon, *Donley* 24-25 Apr (VM, MR) and 2 males at the Crossbar Ranch, *Potter* 30 Apr (RK) - the first and second spring records for the Panhandle, respectively.

Virginia's Warbler - One at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey* 6 May (AH) - formerly considered accidental for the Southern High Plains; now almost annual during spring migration. One at Buffalo Lake NWR, *Randall* 7 May (BP) - formerly considered accidental for the Panhandle; now almost annual during spring migration.

Chestnut-sided Warbler - One male at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey* 6 May (BB, AH, AvH) - essentially accidental for the region; the first report since May of 2003.

Townsend's Warbler - One in a Lubbock yard, *Lubbock* 29 Apr (AH) - accidental for the month; the fifth April record for the Southern High Plains.

Pine Warbler - One overwintered in Amarillo, *Potter* and was last seen on 11 Mar (KS) - a rare overwintering attempt for the Panhandle.

Prothonotary Warbler - One at White River Lake, *Crosby* 13 May (BB) - accidental for the month; the second May record for the Southern High Plains.

Worm-eating Warbler - One at Clapp Park, *Lubbock* 14 May (AH) - very rare for the region; the eleventh May record for the Southern High Plains.

Ovenbird - One in Canyon, *Randall* 7 May (BS) and one at Buffalo Lake NWR, *Randall* 18 May (KS) - a very rare spring migrant for the Panhandle.

Louisiana Waterthrush - One at Clapp Park, *Lubbock* 25 Apr (AH) - formerly considered accidental for the region; now seen annually in early spring.

Hooded Warbler - One male at Clapp Park, *Lubbock* 23-25 Apr (AH, CM), one female at Clapp Park, *Lubbock* 25 Apr (JB, CM), and one male at Aztlan Park, *Lubbock* 27 Apr (PK) - an odd little bump for a typically very rare migrant through the Southern High Plains.

Yellow-breasted Chat - 18 males on territory at White River Lake, *Crosby* 30 Apr (AH) - the fifth consecutive year of breeding at this site.

Tanagers through Finches

Le Conte's Sparrow - 2 at Palo Duro Canyon SP, *Randall* 25 Mar (KS) - a very rare winter record for the Panhandle.

Fox Sparrow - One at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey* 8 Apr (BB) - very late; in fact the latest spring date ever for the Southern High Plains.

Pyrrhuloxia - 2 at Palo Duro Canyon SP, *Randall* 1 Mar-4 Apr (KS) - a rare winter visitor to the Panhandle.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak - One male in Dickens, *Dickens* 26-27 Apr (ML) - formerly considered accidental for April; now almost annual during the month in the Southern High Plains.

Black-headed Grosbeak - One female in a Lubbock yard, *Lubbock* 27 Apr (CB) - formerly considered accidental for April, now almost annual during the month in the Southern High Plains.

Indigo Bunting - A pair at nest at White River Lake, *Crosby* 30 Apr (AH) - the fifth year in a row for breeding at this site.

Bronzed Cowbird - 8 males in Girard, *Kent* 15 Apr (AH, AvH) represented the earliest spring date for the Southern High Plains and a third county record; one male near Tokio, *Terry* 22 Apr (AH) represented a first county record; one male near Spur, *Dickens* 30 Apr (AH) represented a second county record; one male at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey* 6-7 May (BB, AH, AvH) represented a third county record; 2 males at Cochran County Park, *Cochran* 20 May (AH) represented a first county record; one female and 3 males at Lake Six, *Lubbock* 20-22 (BB, AH) represented a now typical sighting for the site; 4 males at the LEAS Nature Trail, *Lubbock* 27 May (AH, RL) represented a now typical sighting for the site.

Scott's Oriole - One male in Wolfforth, *Lubbock* 26 Apr (LW) represented the eighth record for the Southern High Plains and the first April record for the region.

Pine Siskin - One adult provisioning a fledgling in Amarillo, *Potter* 27 May (KS) represented the third breeding record for the Panhandle.

Observers

JB - Joyce Badger
BB - Brandon Best
CB - Clint Boal
RC - Rudy Cadra
AH - Anthony Hewetson
AvH - Aveline Hewetson
TJ - Thomas Johnson
RK - Rich Kazmaier
PK - Phillip Kite
RL - Richmond Lee
ML - Marlene Leiby
VM - Viola Mann

RM - Ray Matlack
CM - Claudette Miller
JM - Jeff Mundy
EM - Ellen McBride
BP - Barrett Pierce
JR - Jim Ray
MR - Mary Nell Risley
BR - Bob Rogers
LS - Laura Sare
KSc - Ken Schmidt
KS - Ken Seyffert
BS - Bill Smith
CS - Cliff Stogner
BSu - Brady Surber
DW - Dan Walker
LW - Lois Wallace
JW - Jim T. Wyatt