

## Northwest Texas (Panhandle and South Plains)

by Anthony Hewetson

Rainfall throughout the region was almost uniformly dismal with most areas well below expected totals for the period – consequently dry with poor waterbird numbers and a dismal showing for shorebirds (all of the normal species put in an appearance – in the few places they could find water – but numbers were pathetic. The ongoing nature of the drought made for a poor season for upland species as well and there were very few oddballs about – it has been very difficult for area birders to get up much enthusiasm for a day's birding.

### Waterfowl through Vultures

Snow Goose – 5 at Cactus Playa, *Moore* 17 Jun (BP) represented a very rare summer report for the Panhandle.

Lesser Scaup – 2 at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey* 15 Jul (BB) represented an extraordinarily rare summer record for the Southern High Plains.

Hooded Merganser – One at Greenbelt Lake, *Donley* 10 Jun (BP, m.ob.) represented the fifth summer record for the Panhandle.

Lesser Prairie Chicken – 8 on a BBS route near Bronco, *Yoakum* 4 Jun (LSm) represented a very rare record for the Southern High Plains.

American White Pelican – 5 over Lubbock, *Lubbock* 14 Jul (AnH) represented the third July record for the Southern High Plains.

Double-crested Cormorant – 65 birds at eleven active nests at Palo Duro Lake, *Hansford* 1 Jul (BP, m.ob.) was an extraordinary breeding effort for the Panhandle and one at Earl Crow Park, *Lubbock* 11 Jul (BB) represented a very early arrival for the Southern High Plains.

American Bittern – One at Greenbelt Lake, *Donley* 10 Jun (BP, m.ob.) and 2 at Lake Tanglewood, *Randall* 3 Jul (TJ) represented very rare summer reports from the Panhandle.

Yellow-crowned Night Heron – One in *Randall* 22 Jul (JH, BM) represented a very rare report from the Panhandle.

### Raptors through Alcids

Osprey – One at Greenbelt Lake, *Donley* 22 Jul (BP) represented the third summer record for the Panhandle.

White-tailed Kite – One near Ceta Canyon, *Randall* 7 Jun (RM, NM) represented the second record ever for the Panhandle and 2 near Lake Meredith, *Moore* 22 Jun (DB, SB) represented the third record ever for the Panhandle. The expansion continues?

Northern Harrier – One at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey* 15 Jul (BB) was the only report, typical of the rarity of this species in the Southern High Plains during the summer.

Sharp-shinned Hawk – One at Lake Meredith, *Moore* 17 Jun (BP) represented a very rare summer record for the Panhandle.

Cooper's Hawk – Suspected as a breeder in the Southern High Plains, one near Afton, *Dickens* 10 Jun (BB) represented the second year in a row of potential breeding in the region.

Ferruginous Hawk – One in *Ochiltree* 10 Jun (BP) and 3 in *Ochiltree* by 1 Jul (BP, LSA, photos) were far east of their usual breeding range in the Panhandle.

Prairie Falcon – Rare, at best, as a breeder in the region, one at Palo Duro Canyon, *Randall* 18 Jun (BP) was a surprise and may have been a breeding bird.

Semipalmated Plover – One at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey* 15 Jul (BB) represented the fourth July record for the Southern High Plains; all since 2001.

Snowy Plover – 11 with 4 chicks at Greenbelt Lake, *Donley* 10 Jun-22 Jul (BP, m.ob.) represented a first county breeding record, 9 with 2 chicks at Lake Meredith, *Moore* 17 Jun (BP) had become 11 with 7 chicks by 25 Jul, and 3 with 2 chicks at Cactus Playa, *Moore* 17 June (BP) also represented first county breeding records.

Long-billed Curlew – One near Cedar Hill, *Floyd* 3 Jun (AnH) was the first June report for the Southern High Plains since 1968.

Sanderling – One at Cactus Playa, *Moore* 25 Jul (BP) represented a very rare fall record for the Panhandle.

Pectoral Sandpiper – 20 at Greenbelt Lake, *Donley* 10 Jun (BP, m.ob.) represented the first June record for the Panhandle, 49 at Greenbelt Lake, *Donley* 11 Jun (BP) was the second June record for the Panhandle and a very large number for the region.

Short-billed Dowitcher – 4 at Chas Guy Park, Lubbock 18 Jul (BB) represented the sixth July record for the Southern High Plains.

Franklin's Gull – One near Amarillo, *Potter* 17 Jun (JL) represented a very rare summer report for the Panhandle and one at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey* 15 Jul (BB) was only the second July record ever for the Southern High Plains.

Common Tern – Very rare in the region, 2 over Maxey Park, *Lubbock* 18 Jun (AnH, RL) provided the Southern High Plains with its fourth June record.

Least Tern – 4 at 2 nests at Greenbelt Lake, *Donley* 10 Jun (BP, m.ob.) proved to be 9 at least 2 nests with further searching on 11 Jun (BP) – in either event, the first breeding recorded for the county.

### **Pigeons through Woodpeckers**

Calliope Hummingbird – One male at a Lubbock feeder, *Lubbock* 20-25 Jul (JC) – formerly considered accidental in the region, now annual during fall migration.

Downy Woodpecker – At least 7 adults with at least 5 fledglings found in the Afton area, *Dickens* 17 Jun (AnH, RK) represented the second year in a row of breeding in the Southern High Plains.

### **Flycatchers through Swallows**

Olive-sided Flycatcher – One at Buffalo Lake NWR, *Randall* 24 Jul (KS) was both the first July record for the Panhandle and the earliest fall record for the Panhandle.

Western Wood Pewee – One at Palo Duro State Park, *Randall* 22 Jul (LSa, m.ob.) represented an early fall report for the Panhandle while one at Ransom Lake, *Lubbock* 3 Jun (BB) represented a late spring report for the Southern High Plains.

Great Crested Flycatcher – 5 near Afton, *Dickens* 17 Jun (AnH, RK) showed that breeding, only recently documented in the Southern High Plains, continues.

Eastern Phoebe – One at Lake Meredith, *Moore* 17 Jun (BP) was far west of its usual haunts within the Panhandle.

Vermilion Flycatcher – One photographed in *Donley* 12 Jul (fide RM) was a second county record and possibly only the third July record for the Panhandle.

Bell's Vireo – A pair at a nest in the Turkey Creek drainage, *Motley* 3 Jun (AnH, AvH) represented a very rare breeding attempt for the Southern High Plains..

Warbling Vireo – A family group of 4 at Palo Duro Canyon State Park, *Randall* 14 Jul (LSa) represented the first breeding record for the county.

Tree Swallow – 7 with 3 nestlings at Greenbelt Lake, *Donley* 10-11 Jun (BP, m.ob., photos) represented the third breeding record for the entire Panhandle.

**Cave Swallow** – 26 adults attending 15 active nests found in a culvert north of Wellman, *Terry* 11 Jun (AnH) represented the second county record and the first confirmed nesting in the county.

### **Titmice through Warblers**

Yellow Warbler – One in a Lubbock yard, *Lubbock* 1 Jun (KD) was most likely a late spring migrant and one of few June records for the Southern High Plains.

Common Yellowthroat – 5 singing males near Afton, *Dickens* 17 June (AnH, RK) represented the fifth consecutive year of breeding at this site.

Yellow-breasted Chat – 59 at White River Lake, *Crosby* 17 Jun (AnH, RK) represented the fifth year of breeding documented for the site and the most dense concentration of this species ever seen by either observer.

### **Tanagers through Finches**

Western Tanager – One male at Muleshoe NWR, *Bailey* 15 Jul (BB) was the third July record ever for the Southern High Plains and a record early date for a fall migrant.

Field Sparrow – 7 at White River Lake, *Crosby* 2 July (AnH, RK) represented the third year of breeding documented for the site and the highest number recorded thus far.

Indigo Bunting – A pair tending a nest in the Turkey Creek drainage, *Motley* 3 Jun (AnH, AvH) and 23 adults and 3 fledglings at White River Lake, *Crosby* 17 Jun (AnH, RK) further established the species as a member of the Southern High Plains breeding fauna.

Bronzed Cowbird – 3 males near Floydada, *Floyd* 3 Jun (AnH, AvH) and 3 males near Dougherty, *Floyd* 4 Jun (AnH, AvH) represented the first and second county records, respectively.

### **Observers**

BB – Brandon Best

DB – Deborah Blackburn

SB – Susan Broderick

JC – Jim Crites

KD – Ken Dixon

AnH – Anthony Hewetson

AvH – Aveline Hewetson

JH – Janelle Hutchison

TJ – Thomas L. Johnson

RK – Rich Kostecke

RL – Richmond Lee

JL – Jim Luce

RM – Ray Matlack

BM – Bill McKinney

NM – Naima Montcer  
BP – Barrett Pierce  
LSa – Laura Sare  
KS – Ken Seyffert  
LSm – Leanna Smith